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ROBERT BUCHANAN



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BEGUN IN 1858

ANNAN WATER.

ANNAN WATER

A Romance

By ROBERT BUCHANAN

AUTHOR OF 'THE SHADOW OF THE SWORD,' 'GOD AND THE MAN,'
'A CHILD OF NATURE,' ETC.



A NEW EDITION

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NOTE.—This Romance has been dramatized previous to publication, represented, and duly protected. All further dramatization of the subject, or of any portion thereof, is therefore forbidden by the Author.

DEDICATION.

THIS Romance, in certain pages of which an Englishwoman's noble work abroad, among her suffering sisters, is faintly shadowed forth, and which is partly founded on records made public by her, I dedicate with the deepest respect and admiration to

MISS LEIGH,
OF THE ENGLISH MISSION,

PARIS.

'I never bowed but to superior worth,
Nor ever failed in my allegiance *there* !

ROBERT BUCHANAN.

October 27, 1853

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ANNAN WATER.

CHAPTER I.

TWO OLD BACHELORS.

It was Martinmas Sunday.

The evening service was just over, and the congregation, more than usually scanty, had dispersed itself over the Moss towards the various farms and fields which were scattered here and there upon it. A light still burned in the vestry, while Solomon Mucklebackit, the sexton, waited in the porch for the minister to come forth.

'There'll be snaw the night,' he muttered, placing the key in the oaken door, preliminary to locking up—'there'll be snaw the night, or I'm sair mistaen. And the Annan's rising; it's snawing noo amang the hilla.'

So saying, he peered out into the dark night, looking inland, where black clouds were gathering and blotting out the faint rays of the full moon. The wind was crying, and blent with its cry was another fainter sound, that of the troubled Annan, which flowed seaward scarcely a stone's throw away.

Close to him, and to right and left of him, stretched the old kirkyard, in which he had been sexton, man and boy, for forty years. Here and there in the dimness flashed a tombstone, and everywhere the rough graves rolled like a sea. He looked out

impatiently, while a sudden gust of wind crossing the kirkyard struck the old church till it shook again, and died away like low thunder in the direction of the firth.

‘What’s keeping the meenister?’ he murmured impatiently. ‘It’s time we were baith hame.’

As he spoke, there flitted before him on the grass-grown footpath something like a human figure, with a gleam of white like a dress fluttering in the wind.

‘Wha’s there?’ he cried, starting nervously.

In a moment the figure vanished, disappearing along the footpath towards the church-gate; and simultaneously a low moan, as of a human creature in pain, rose and died upon the chilly air.

Had Solomon been a superstitious man, instead of the most matter-of-fact of human creatures, he might have suspected something supernatural in a presence so mysterious, coming at such an hour and in such a place; but as it was, he simply grumbled to himself, audibly expressing his dislike of ‘graceless hizzies’ who came hanging about the sacred spot after dark. For the kirkyard was a favourite trysting and courting place of rural lovers of all ages, whose goings-on scandalized holier members of the population, especially Solomon the sexton, who was an old bachelor, and a misogynist into the bargain. To the cry of seeming agony he paid no heed, attributing it to the pranks of some one or other of the ‘graceless hizzies’ aforesaid, playing the ghost and trying to ‘scaur’ or fright the lawful custodian of the place.

All at once the light in the vestry was extinguished, and the minister, a man of about fifty years of age, appeared on the threshold, wrapped in a heavy winter cloak and carrying a thick staff.

‘Lock up, Solomon, my man,’ he said.

Solomon obeyed, turning the key in the inner door, and then that of the outer one of solid oak, while the minister stood waiting on the path. Then the two, side by side, and with

much the same kind of mechanic trot, passed across the churchyard, pausing now and again to struggle with the fierce gusts, and to hold on their head-gear—the sexton his Sunday ‘bonnet,’ and the minister his broad-brimmed clerical hat.

Reaching the iron gate, which was rattling and creaking in the wind, they descended three moss-grown steps and reached the highway. Here all was pitch-dark, for the shadow of tall yew-trees fell from the other side, deepening the nocturnal blackness; but crossing the road they opened another gate, crossed the garden where the yew-trees grew, and reached the door of the manse.

Standing here in complete shelter, they heard the ‘sough’ of the blast overhead among the tossing boughs, like the wild thunder of a stormy sea.

The manse was a plain two-story building, as old as the times of the Covenant, and containing numberless cheerless chambers, the majority of which were unfurnished. Here the Reverend Sampson Lorraine had dwelt in solitude for five-and-twenty years. He had come to the place as a shy young bachelor, a student and a bookworm, and despite all the sieges that had been laid to his heart, as was inevitable in a place where marriageable men were few and spinsters many, a bachelor he had remained ever since. People said that a love disappointment in early life had made him thereafter invulnerable to all the charms of women, but at first his single condition made him very popular. Presently, however, as his position as a bachelor grew more confirmed, and his eccentricities increased, he ceased to awaken much interest. For the rest, he was a ripe if somewhat pedantic scholar, and a constant contributor to a journal of Scottish antiquities published from month to month in Edinburgh.

Opening the door with a latch-key, he entered a bare lobby, and striking a light, led the way into a large room on the ground floor. It was scantily furnished with an old carpet, an old-fashioned circular table with drawers, and several chairs;

but on the walls were numerous shelves, covered with books. The room had two large windows looking on the back lawn, which sloped down to the river, but was without curtains of any kind.

A fire burned on the hearth, and a rude box of peat fuel stood by the fireside. One side of the table was spread with a clean cloth, on which stood a tray with bread, oatcake, cheese, and butter, a large stone water jug, a black bottle, and some glasses.

‘Sit ye down, Solomon,’ said the minister, placing a lighted candle on the table.

Solomon stood, hat in hand. Every Sunday evening for many a long year he had entered the house in the same way, at the same hour, and received the same invitation.

Seen in the dim light of the room, the sexton was a little, wizened, white-haired man, with hoary bushy eyebrows, keen grey eyes, and sunken, sun-tanned cheeks. He was dressed in decent black, with a white shirt, and the kind of collar known in Scotland as ‘stick ups.’ The minister on the other hand, was tall and somewhat portly, with a round, boyish face, gentle blue eyes, and mild good-humoured mouth. His hair was white as snow, and fell almost to his shoulders.

‘Sit ye down, sit ye down,’ he repeated; ‘and take a glass—the night is cold.’

Solomon placed his bonnet carefully on the edge of the table, and seated himself respectfully on one of the cane-bottomed chairs. Then, leisurely and solemnly, he poured out a glass of raw spirit. Meantime Mr. Lorraine, having divested himself of his cloak and hat, sat down in the armchair by the fireside.

‘Here’s fortune, sir,’ said Solomon, drinking off the whisky; then, wiping his mouth with his sleeve, he sat bolt upright and expectant, waiting if his superior had anything more to say.

‘We had but a small gathering the night, Solomon,’ observed the minister thoughtfully.

‘Fifteen folk, no counting the bairns; but we hae preached

to fewer. I mind last winter, when the snaw was on the groun', we had but three at afternoon service, forbye Mysie Simpson and mysel'.

The minister laughed gently.

'I'm afraid the new lights are too much for us,' he observed. 'Young Mr. Lauderdale up at the Knowes has, they tell me, a great congregation.'

Solomon drew himself up and gave a snort of contempt mingled with defiance.

'Sae ye had yoursel', when folk thought ye were a mairrying man, sir. I hae seen the auld kirk crammed to the door, and twa-thirds mairriageable lasses and their mithers; but noo it's a godless generation!'

The minister fixed his eye thoughtfully on the fire as he replied:

'I'm afraid we are behind the times, Solomon. We are both of us becoming old, and the young folk are growing up on every side. There's marrying and christening everywhere, and still we two remain alone. In a little while, Solomon, we shall be called to our account, without having known, either of us, the blessing that woman's love can give, or the comfort that comes with the cry of bairns.'

'Ye mind what St. Paul said, sir,' said the other doggedly. 'And women are kittle cattle!'

'I suppose that's good philosophy, but it's small comfort, Solomon, my man. I think I should have been a happier man if I had married!'

The sexton smiled incredulously and shook his head; then, with as near an approach to a smile as his withered features could command, he said slyly and sarcastically:

'It's never owre late to men', sir. You're a hale man yet, Lord kens, and three or fower I wat o' wad jest snap at ye! There's Miss Dalrymple o' the Mearns, and the Weedow Burness, and——'

'No, no, Solomon,' said Mr. Lorraine laughing, 'you over-

rate my chances, and, whether or no, I'm far o'er old to try matrimony *now*. But it's a lonesome life, a lonesome life! Whenever I hear the school bairns crying in the street, I envy those that have little ones to dandle upon the knee. I have no kith or kin—nay, scarce a friend, in all the world.'

'Ye hae *me*, sir,' returned Solomon in a low voice, 'no that I wad liken mysel' to a meenister and a scholar like yoursel'; but I hae been your clerk for nigh thirty years, and auld acquaintance is kindly, like clean linen. Atweel, is it no better to be a free man than to hae a scoldin' wife, or bairns that gang the deil's road, like mony i' the parish? And if you wad tak' a *gless* noo an' then to cheer your heart, you'd find it a better comforter than tane or tither!'

With this pregnant sentence Solomon rose to go, while Mr. Lorraine, without responding, continued to look dreamily at the fire.

'Are ye mindin' the funeral the morn?' the sexton asked, taking up his bonnet.

Mr. Lorraine nodded.

'Can I bring ye anything before I gang to bed? I maun rise at five to feenish the grave.'

'No; go to bed. I shall sit up and read a little.'

'Weel, good-night, sir.'

'Good-night, Solomon.'

Thereupon Solomon left the room, closing the door softly behind him. Lighting a candle in the lobby, he made his way quietly to a chamber in the upper part of the house, where he slept, and which was, indeed, the only chamber in the manse, excepting the minister's sitting-room and adjoining bedroom, which contained any furniture.

Many years before Solomon had taken up his abode there, on the minister's invitation, and it was his only home. Besides performing the duties of sexton and clerk, he acted generally as factotum to Mr. Lorraine, attended to the garden, and groomed the pony on which the minister made his visitations about the

country. An aged woman, Mysie Simpson, came in every day to clean and cook, but invariably retired to her own dwelling at nightfall. So the two old men were practically alone together, and, despite the difference in their social positions, regarded each other with a peculiar attachment.

The minister sat for some time musing, then with a sigh he took a book from the shelves and began to read. It was a volume of old sermons, written by a south country clergyman, impassioned, wrathful, and in the narrow sense Calvinistic. As he read the wind roared round the house, and moaned in the chimneys, and rattled the shutterless windows; but as the wind rose the darkness decreased, and the vitreous rays of the moon began playing on the window panes.

Mr. Lorraine lit his pipe—the only luxury in which he indulged; for despite his plump figure, which he inherited, he was abstemious and a teetotaler. Then, with another sigh, he rose and walked thoughtfully up and down the room; paused at one of the windows, and looked down on the moonlighted lawn which sloped to the river-side; talking all the time to himself, as was his confirmed habit.

‘Ay, ay, a wild night!—and snow coming, Solomon says! Eerie, eerie is the sough of the wind in the trees. It minds me ever of *her*, and when the moon’s up it is like the shining of her face out of the grave. Wee Marjorie! my bonnie doo! Thirty long years ago she died, and I’m still here! still here!’

Tears stood in the old man’s eyes as he looked out in a dream. Through the long years of loneliness and poverty—for his living was indeed a poor one—he had cherished the memory of one who had gone away from him to God when only in her eighteenth year.

‘She was a grand scholar tho’ a lassie and so young,’ he murmured after a pause. ‘I taught her the Latin and the Greek, and she tried to teach me the French, but I was o’er blaze to learn a new-fangled tongue. Marjorie! my own bonnie Marjorie! —I can hear her voice singing still, as when we were lass and lad,’

Presently he walked to the circular table, and unlocking a drawer drew forth several old school-books and some sheets of time-worn music. He turned them over gently, like a man touching sacred things. One of the books was Xenophon's 'Anabasis,' another Ovid's 'Metamorphoses,' a third a book of French grammar and exercises ; and on the flyleaf of each was written, in a pretty feminine hand, the owner's name—'Marjorie Glen.' The same name was written on all the pieces of music but one, on which was inscribed, in faded ink, and in the same hand, these words :—

'To dearest Sampson, with Marjorie's love.'

The piece was an old Scotch song of infinite beauty and pathos—the 'Land o' the Leal.' He opened it and read the words sadly with the sweet old music ringing in his ear—

'I'm wearing awa', Jean,
Like snaw when it's thaw, Jean,
I'm wearing awa' to
The Land o' the Leal !'

Alas ! and nearly a lifetime had slipped away since the angels in that shining land had beckoned, and the little hand had put down the sheet of music, and the loving heart had grown cold and still !

Close to the books and music, in a corner of the drawer, was a packet of old letters, bound with a silken ribbon which the writer had once worn in her hair. The old man took up the packet without opening it, and kissed it reverently, then with streaming eyes he knelt down before his chair, covered his face with his hands, and prayed.

'Marjorie ! my pet ! my bonnie doo !' he said aloud. 'Can you hear my voice calling you where you sit and sing among the angels of God ? He took you from me when ye were little more than a bairn, and He left me toil to alone, though He gave me strength to thole my trouble and live on. You're a bairn still, my Marjorie, and I'm old, old ; your hair's golden still, my pet, but mine is like the snow, Will you *ken* me when we meet at

last? Ay, ay, it will be a strange meeting that—between an old, old man and a bairn! But though the body grows weak and old the heart keeps young, and I love you still, my doo! May the Lord God that took you from me, have you in his keeping, Marjorie, now and for ever more. Amen!

Even as he knelt a white face was pressed against the window pane, and two wild eyes looked in like the eyes of a spirit from another world. When he rose to his feet, still muttering to himself, they had vanished, but a minute after there came a loud single knock at the front door.

The minister started, listening, and the same moment a gust of unusual force shook the house to its foundation.

‘Bless me, what’s that?’ he exclaimed. ‘I thought I heard a knock at the hall door, but maybe my ears deceived me. It was only the wind, I’m thinking.’

And he placed his precious relics back in the drawer, locking it carefully and placing the key in a worn leathern purse which he carried in his pocket.

At that moment the knock was repeated.

‘Dear me!’ he cried, ‘there’s some one knocking after all. Maybe it’s a sick call.’

Lifting the candle from the table he trotted from the room, crossed along the lobby, and opened the hall door. As he did so the wind sprang in like a tiger, and the light was blown out, but the front garden was flooded with moonlight save under the very shadow of the trees.

He saw nobody, however; whoever had knocked had disappeared.

‘Who’s there?’ he cried, looking round on every side.

There was no reply.

Perplexed and somewhat startled, he stepped out into the porch, and instantaneously the door was banged and closed behind him. He took another step forward, and almost stumbled over something like a dark bundle of clothing lying on the doorstep.

'Bless my soul!' he murmured, 'what's this?'

At the same moment a faint cry came upon his ear. Stooping down in great agitation he lifted the bundle, and discovered to his consternation that it contained the form of a living child.

CHAPTER II.

'A GIFT FROM GOD.'

A COARSE Paisley shawl was wrapt round the infant, covering all but a portion of its tiny face. As it lay like a mummy in its wrappings, it continued to cry loudly, and the cry went at once to the minister's tender heart.

But in a moment the old man guessed the truth—that the hapless creature had been left there by some one who had knocked and fled. Still holding the child in his arms, he ran out in the garden and looked on every side.

'Come back!' he said, 'whoever you are, come back!'

But no one responded. The wind moaned dismally in the trees that lifted their black branches overhead, that was all. He ran to the gate and looked up and down the road, but could see nobody. As he stood in perplexity the child cried again loudly and struggled in his arms.

'Bless me!' he murmured, 'I must take it in or it will die of cold!'

He ran back to the door and knocked loudly again and again. It was some time before he was heard. At last, however, he heard footsteps coming along the passage, and redoubled his knocking. The door opened, and Solomon Mucklebackit, half dressed, appeared on the threshold.

Without a word the minister ran into the lobby.

'Losh me, meenister, is it yoursel?' ejaculated Solomon in amazement. 'I thought you were in bed.'

‘Come this way—quick!’ shouted Mr. Lorraine. ‘Bring a light!’

And, still carrying his burthen, he ran into the sitting-room. Solomon closed the door, struck a match and lighted a candle, and followed him immediately. Then his amazement deepened. To see Mr. Lorraine standing by the fireside with a crying infant in his arms was indeed enough to awaken perplexity and wonder.

‘My conscience, meenister, what hae ye gotten there?’

‘A child! some one left it in the porch, knocked, and ran away. Run, Solomon, search up and down the road, and see if you can find them. Shame upon them whoever they are. Don’t stand staring, but run.’

Perfectly bewildered, Solomon stood gaping; then, with one horror-stricken look at the infant, left the room, and ran from the house.

Left alone with the child the minister seemed puzzled what to do. He held it awkwardly, and its cries continued; then to still it, he rocked it to and fro in his arms. Finding it still troublesome he placed it down in the arm-chair, and softly loosened the shawl in which it was wrapt, freeing its little arms.

Its cries ceased for a time, and it lay with eyes wide open, spreading its little hands in the warm twilight.

The minister put on his glasses and looked at it with solemn curiosity.

It was a tiny infant, about two months old; its little pink face was pinched with cold, and its great blue eyes dim with crying. A common linen cap was on its head, and its gown was of coarse linen. But it was so small, so pretty, that the minister’s tender heart melted over it at once. He offered it his forefinger, which it gripped with its tiny hands, blinking up into his face.

‘Poor wee mite!’ he murmured, ‘I wonder who your mother is? A wicked woman, I’m thinking, to cast you away on such a night as this!’

As if in answer to the words, the child began to cry again,

'I can see naeboddy,' cried Solomon, re-entering the room; 'I hae searchit up and doon, as far toonways as Mysie Simpson's door, and beyont to the waterside, and there's nane stirring. It's awfu' strange!'

He looked at the child, and scratched his head; he looked at the minister, and nodded it ominously. A curious conjecture, too irreverent for utterance, had passed across his naturally suspicious mind.

The eyes of the two old men met, the minister flushed slightly, while Solomon's dry lips assumed the shape generally taken when one is about to give a prolonged whistle; but no sound followed.

'Whaur did your reverence find the bairn? on the doorstane did you say?'

The minister nodded. Thereupon Solomon walked over to the chair, put on a pair of brass-rimmed spectacles, and inspected the child much as his master had done, but with prolonged and dubious shakes of the head.

'Lord preserve us a'!' he muttered.

'Solomon,' cried Mr. Lorraine impatiently, 'what's to be done?'

Solomon scratched his head; then his face lightened with sudden inspiration as he answered:

'Put the thing whaur ye found him, on the doorstane. Lea' him there—he's nane o' oors. Maybe the mither will come back and take him awa'.'

The minister's face flushed indignantly.

'On such a night as this! Solomon Mucklebackit, if you have no more Christian advice than that to offer, you can go back to bed.'

Solomon was astonished. Seldom had he seen his master exhibit such authority, tempered with indignation. Not knowing how to reply, he effected a diversion.

'See, sir,' he said, still inspecting the child as if it were some curious species of fish, 'the cratur's wringin' wat!'

Such was the fact, though it had escaped the minister's agitated scrutiny. The shawl and under dress of the infant were soaked with rain or melted snow.

'Bless my soul!' cried Mr. Lorraine, bending down by Solomon's side; 'and its little body is quite cold. Fetch Mysie Simpson at once!'

Solomon shook his head.

'Mysie's away the night wi' her kinsfolk at the Mearns.'

'Then there's only one thing to be done,' cried Mr. Lorraine with sudden decision. 'We must undress the child at once and put him to bed, and in the morning we can decide how to act. If we leave him like this he will die of cold.'

'Put him to bed!' echoed Solomon; 'whaur?'

'In my room, Solomon, unless you would like to take him with you!'

'Wi' me! I'm no use with bairns! I couldna sleep a wink!'

'Then he shall stay wi' me! Look, Solomon, how pretty he is, how bright his eyes are! Fetch me a blanket at once, and warm it by the fire.'

Solomon left the room. The minister lifted the burden in his arms and sat down by the hearth. Then, nervously and awkwardly, he undid the shawl and put it aside; loosened the baby's outer garments, which were quite wet, and drew them gently off. Thus engaged, the good man was indeed a picture to see—his soft eyes beaming with love and tenderness, his face puzzled and troubled, his little plump hands at work with clumsy kindness.

Solomon entered with a blanket, warmed it for a minute at the fire, and then placed it softly under the child, which now lay mother-naked—as sweet and bright a little cherub as ever drew mother's milk.

Suddenly the sexton uttered an exclamation.

'Lord, preserve us a'! It's no a man-child ava! It's a wee lassie!'

Mr. Lorraine started, trembled, and almost dropped his load; then, bashfully and tenderly, he wrapped the warm blanket round the infant, leaving only its face visible.

‘Lad or lassie,’ he said, ‘the Lord has left it in our keeping!’

‘But it is an awfu’ responsibility! A woman-cratur’ in oor hoose, meenister! We hae dwelt here thegither for nigh thirty years, and nane o’ that sex has ever bided here, save auld Mysie when she comes to redd up the place. I’m thinkin’ it’s the beginnin’ o’ trouble.’

Mr. Lorraine smiled; then lifting the child in his arms, he kissed it on the cheek, adding with reverence: ‘Suffer little children to come unto me, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven!’

Stooping to the hearth-rug, Solomon lifed from it a tiny chemise which had fallen there, and examined it with ludicrous horror. Suddenly his eyes perceived something which had escaped Mr. Lorraine’s nervous gaze. Pinned to the chemise was a piece of paper with some writing upon it.

‘Look, meenister,’ cried Solomon, unpinning the paper and holding it up, ‘there’s a letter addressed to yoursel’ here. Will I read it?’

‘Certainly.’

Then Solomon read, in his own broad accent, which we will not reproduce, these words, which were written in a clear though tremulous female hand:—

‘To MR. LORRAINE,

‘By the time you read this, the writer will be lying dead and cold in Annan Water. You are a good man and a clergyman. Keep the child, as the gift of God, and as you use her, may God use you!’

That was all. Solomon stammered through the words in horror, while Mr. Lorraine listened in genuine astonishment.

‘There, meenister!’ exclaimed Solomon, indignantly. ‘Did I no’ tell ye? It’s a scandal, an outrage. Keep the bairn, indeed; and a woman bairn! Absurd notion.’

'Hush, Solomon,' interposed the minister solemnly. 'I begin to see the hand of God in this.'

'The hand o' some brazen hizzie, meenister! Send the bairn to the workhouse.'

The minister frowned angrily.

'Solomon Mucklebackit, if these are your sentiments be good enough to retire.'

'But, meenister——'

'I shall accept this trust. If, as is to be feared, the poor mother of this innocent bairn should perish this night, I shall not neglect her last appeal.'

'Lord preserve us! You'll never keep the bairn!'

'That is to be seen. Be sure I will do what my conscience bids me. Listen to me, Solomon. When that knock came to the door, I was thinking of one who is long dead—one who for many years has been one of the angels of God; and my heart was full of its own loneliness, as you ken. And a little while before, Solomon, I was saying—do you mind?—how dreary a house is without the cry of bairns. Then the knock came, and I went to the door, and I found this little child abandoned by its mother. Solomon, if God himself should have sent her to us to comfort our old age!'

As he spoke, the minister bent down again and kissed the child, and his gentle eyes streamed with tears, while the light blue orbs of the infant looked up into his face. In spite of himself, Solomon was touched. He coughed violently to conceal his agitation.

'If it was a man-bairn, meenister, I shouldna mind sae much. But a lassie—a woman-bairn! It looks like the deil's wark!'

Mr. Lorraine laughed cheerily, and rose with the child in his arms. Lighted by Solomon, he passed into an adjoining room, a scantily furnished chamber, containing a plain bed and some common articles of furniture.

Opening the bedclothes, he placed the infant in a cosy spot, and arranged the blankets tenderly around it.

'Look, Solomon ! Is she not bonnie ?'

Solomon gave a grunt of doubtful approval.

'Good-night, Solomon,' continued the minister.

A word of protest was on the sexton's tongue, but he checked it in time, then with one last stare of amazement, perplexity, and surprise, he left the room.

'The warl's comin' to an en',' he muttered, as he ascended the stairs to his room. 'A woman-bairn in our hoose !—a lassie in the minister's ain bed ! Weel, weel, weel !'

Meantime Mr. Lorraine sat by the bedside, looking at the child, who had almost immediately fallen asleep. Presently he reached out his arm and took one of her little hands into his own, and his eyes were dim and his soul was travelling back to the past. Hours passed thus, and he still sat in a dream.

'Marjorie, my bonnie doo !' he murmured aloud again. 'Is this indeed a gift from God—and *you* ?'

CHAPTER III.

THE DEAD WOMAN.

At five o'clock the next morning, when Solomon Mucklebackit, candle in hand, descended the stairs, he found the minister sitting by the bedside fast asleep, with his grey head resting on the side of the pillow, and his right arm outstretched over the counterpane above the still slumbering child. At the sound of Solomon's entrance, however, Mr. Lorraine awoke at once, rubbed his eyes, and looked in a dazed way around him ; then his eyes fell upon the infant, and his face grew bright as sunshine.

'Bless me, meenister ! Hae ye been watching *here* a' nicht ?'

'I fell to sleep,' was the reply, 'and I was dreaming, Solomon, such bonnie dreams ! I thought that I was up yonder among the angels, and that one of them came to me with a face I well

remember—ah, so bright!—and put a little bairn—*this* bairn—into my arms; and then, as I held the pretty one, a thousand voices sang an old Scotch song, the “Land o’ the Leal.” Dear me—and it is nearly daybreak, I suppose?’

Solomon did not reply in words, but, pulling up the blind, showed the outer world still dark, but trembling to the first dim rays of wintry dawn, while snow was thickly falling, and the garden was covered with a sheet of virgin white.

The minister rose shivering, for the air was bitter cold; his limbs, too, were stiff and chilly.

‘What’s to be done now?’ asked Solomon gloomily. ‘I maun awa’ an’ feenish the grave, but Mysie will be here at six.’

‘I will watch until Mysie comes,’ answered Mr. Lorraine; then bending over the bed he continued, ‘See, Solomon, my man, how soundly she sleeps, and how pretty she looks!’

Solomon grunted, and moved towards the door.

‘Will I put on the parritch mysel’?’ he demanded. ‘Ye maun be wanting something after sic a night.’

‘Nothing, nothing. Go on to the kirkyard.’

An hour later, when the old woman appeared, having let herself in by a key at the back door, she was at once apprised of the situation. Having learned by old habit to keep her thoughts to herself, and being of kindly disposition, and the mother of a large grown-up family, she at once, without questioning, entered upon her duties as nurse. The child having awakened, crying, she took it up in her arms and hushed it upon her bosom, where it soon became still; then, passing to the kitchen, she warmed some new milk, and fed it with a spoon.

The minister looked on with a puzzled smile.

‘See, sir,’ she said, ‘hoo she tak’s the milk frae the coo! She’s been rearit by hand, and has never tasted the briest; but without a bottle to drink frae she’ll never leeve.’

By this time day had broken; and when he had seen the child comfortably cared for, the minister put on his cloak and walked forth to make inquiries. He found the air still thick

with snow, which lay ankle-deep upon the ground, and all the lonely landscape wore that infinitely forlorn and dreary aspect which only comes in time of winter storm. In the distance, inland, the hills loomed white and dim ; snow covered the fields and draped the hedges and leafless trees ; and snow was drifted knee-deep on the leeward side of the icebound road. Passing up townward, he reached the few scattered cottages on the skirts of the village, and met several farm labourers going sleepily to work. From them he could gather no information, and he repeated his inquiries from door to door with the same result.

The village consisted of one straggling street with numerous small cottages, a few poverty-stricken shops, and a one-storied tavern. Jock Steven, who kept the latter, was standing on the threshold with a drowsy stare, having just thrown open the door ; and on questioning him Mr. Lorraine gained his first and only piece of information. A woman, a stranger to the place, had entered the inn over night, carrying an infant underneath her shawl, and had asked for a glass of milk, which she had drunk hastily and fittid away—like a ghost. Her face was partially hidden, but Jock was certain that she was a stranger. Stay ! yes, there was something more. She had inquired for the manse, and the innkeeper had pointed out the direction of the church and the minister's abode.

Further inquiries up and down the village elicited no further information. Several other individuals had seen the stranger, but none knew her, and little attention had been paid her. Mr. Lorraine was more and more puzzled. It seemed quite clear, however, that the woman had come thither of set purpose and by no mere accident, and that her intention had been to abandon her infant, leaving it under the minister's protection. Who could she be ? What wind of utter despair had wafted her to that place of all places, and to *his* door of all doors ? He racked his brain to think of any one of his parishioners whom he could connect with the mystery, but the attempt was useless. Then with a shudder of horror he thought of the words of the

paper which Solomon had found pinned to the child's garment. By that time, in all probability, the body of the wretched mother was lying at the bottom of Annan Water, while her sinful soul was face to face with its Eternal Judge.

Perplexed and weary, the good man trotted back to the manse. Here, in the rudely-furnished kitchen, he found a bright fire burning, his breakfast ready, and Mysie seated by the ingleside with the child in her lap, in voluble conversation with the old sexton. In answer to their eager questions he only shook his head, then sitting down at the wooden table he took his simple meal of oatmeal porridge, with tea and bread to follow.

'Have you finished the grave, Solomon?' he asked presently.

'I hae feenished the grave,' answered Solomon, 'and I wish the wicked bizzie, the mither o' that bairn, was lying in it, though I sair misdoot she's nae Christian cratur'. May the deil grip her and punish her for bringing her ill deeds to oor door.'

'Hush, Solomon!' said Mr. Lorraine; 'it is not for us to pass judgment upon her, or wish her harm. Perhaps, after all, she is more sinned against than sinning. God help her and I forgive her, whoever she is!'

Solomon shook his head savagely, and grunted in deprecation.

'It's a crying shame, and a scandal to the parish,' he exclaimed. 'We canna keep the bairn!'

'We *shall* keep her!' replied the minister thoughtfully. 'As I told you before, Solomon, my man, I begin to see the hand of God in this. If, as I fear, and as she has threatened, the miserable woman has destroyed herself, we must sooner or later discover who and what she is, but till then I must accept the sacred trust.'

'It's the way wi' them a', meenister,' cried the sexton stubbornly. 'They impose upon you, kenning your heart is owre tender.'

Mr. Lorraine smiled gently as he responded:

'I am glad that they think so well of me. I should have a

hard heart indeed if I had neither love nor pity for this motherless bairn.'

* * * *

The wretched mother, whoever she was, had indeed chosen wisely when she had resolved, while determining to abandon her infant, to leave it at the gentle minister's door. Days passed, and in spite of Solomon's protestations it was still an inmate of the manse. Mysie Simpson understood the rearing process well, and since the child, as she had surmised, had never known the breast, it throve well upon 'the bottle.' The minister went and came lightly, as if the burthen of twenty years had been taken from his shoulders; had it indeed been his own offspring, he could not have been more anxious or more tender. And Solomon Mucklebackit, despite his assumption of sternness and indignation, was secretly sympathetic. He, too, had a tender corner in his heart, which the child's innocent beauty did not fail to touch.

Of course this extraordinary affair at once became the talk of the parish, as Solomon had predicted, and there were not wanting evil tongues to say that the old minister had good reasons for accepting the office of foster-father and protector. Of the passing scandal, which no one really believed, but which was passed freely enough from mouth to mouth, Mr. Lorraine heard nothing; but Solomon heard it, and was righteously indignant. However, Solomon was a wight of stubborn disposition, and the reflections on his master's character only succeeded in making him a partizan of the pretty cause of them all. Before a week had passed he had begun to exhibit a sort of self-satisfied paternity, very curious to observe.

One morning, some seven or eight days after the arrival of the infant, when the storms had blown themselves hoarse, and a dull, black, thaw had succeeded the falling and drifting snow, news came to the manse that the body of a woman had been found lying on the brink of the Annan, just where its waters meet the wide sands of the Solway, and mingle with the salt

streams of the ocean tide. Greatly agitated, Mr. Lorraine mounted his pony, and at once rode along the lonely highway which winds through the flat reaches of the Moss. Arriving close to the great sands, he was directed to a disused outbuilding or barn, belonging to a large sea-facing farm, and standing some hundred yards above high water-mark. A group of fishermen and peasant men and women were clustered at the door; at his approach the men lifted their hats respectfully, and the women courtesied.

On making inquiries, the minister learnt that the body had been discovered at daybreak by some salmon fishers when netting the river that morning's tide. They had at once given the alarm, and carried 'it' up to the dilapidated barn where it was then lying.

The barn was without a door, and partially roofless. Day and night the salt spray of the ocean was blown upon it, encrusting its black sides with a species of filmy salt; and from the dark rafters and down the broken walls clung slimy weeds and mosses, and over it a pack of sea-gulls wheeled and screamed.

The minister took off his hat and entered in bareheaded.

Stretched upon the earthen floor was what seemed at first rather a shapeless mass than a human form; a piece of coarse tarpaulin was placed over it, covering it from head to foot. Gently and reverently, Mr. Lorraine drew back a corner of the tarpaulin and revealed to view the disfigured lineaments of what had once been a living face; but though the features were changed and unrecognisable, and the eye-sockets were empty of their shining orbs, and the mouth disfigured and hidden by foulness, the face was still set in a woman's golden hair.

With the horror deep upon him, the minister trembled and prayed. Then drawing the covering still lower, he caught a glimpse of a delicate hand, clutched as in the agonies of death; and sparkling on the middle finger thereof was a slender ring of gold.

'God forgive me!' he murmured to himself; 'if this is the mother of the child, I did her a cruel wrong.'

He stood gazing and praying for some time, his eyes dim with sympathetic tears; then, after replacing the covering reverently, he turned away and passed through the group which clustered, watching him at the door.

The day following there was a simple funeral, in a solitary burial-place, seldom used, and lying within a short distance of the spot where the body was found. Mr. Lorraine defrayed the expenses out of his own pocket, saw that everything was decently though simply arranged, and himself read the beautiful burial service over the coffin. He had now no doubt in his mind that the drowned woman was the mother of the infant left under his care, and that by destroying herself she had simply carried out her desperate determination.

All attempts to identify her, however, continued without avail. Inquiries were made on every side, advertisements inserted in the local newspapers, without the slightest result; no one came forward to give any information. But by this time the minister's mind was quite made up. He would keep the child, and, with God's blessing, rear her as his own; he would justify the unhappy mother's dependence on his charity and loving-kindness.

So it came to pass that late in the gloaming of the old bachelor's life the cry of a child was heard in the lonely house; and somehow or other, despite Solomon Mucklebackit's prognostications, the house became brighter and merrier for the sound. Solomon himself soon fell under the spell, and when a little warm with whisky he would allude to the child, with a comic sense of possession, as 'oor bairn.'

At last, one day, there was a quiet christening in the old kirk, where Mr. Lorraine had officiated so many years. Mysie held the infant in her arms, while Solomon stood at hand, blinking through his horn spectacles, and the minister performed the simple ceremony.

After long and tender deliberation the minister had fixed upon a name, which he now gave to the poor little castaway, who had neither father nor mother, nor any other kinsfolk in the world after whom she could be called.

He christened her *Marjorie Annan*.

Marjorie, after that other beloved *Marjorie*, who had long before joined—or so he dreamed—the bright celestial band; *Annan*, after that troubled water wherein the miserable mother had plunged and died.

CHAPTER IV.

MARJORIE ANNAN.

ON a bright morning of early spring, between sixteen and seventeen years after the events described in the first chapters of this story, a golden-haired young girl might have been seen tripping down the High Street of the market town of Dumfries. Her dress was prettily if not over-fashionably cut, a straw hat shaded her bright blue eyes, and her boots and gloves were those of a lady. Under her arm she carried several books—school-books, to all intents and purposes.

By her side, talking to her eagerly, was a young man about three years her senior.

From time to time, as she tripped along with her companion, she had to stop and exchange words with passers-by, who greeted her by name; and from many of the shop doors and windows friendly heads nodded and bright faces beamed. It was clear that she was well known in the little town, and a general favourite. Indeed, there were few of the residents within a radius of ten miles round Dumfries who did not know something of *Marjorie Annan*, the foster-child and adopted daughter of Mr. Lorraine.

Her companion, John Sutherland, was fair complexioned and very pale. He was plainly clad in a suit of dark tweed, and

wore a wideawake hat. His whole aspect betokened delicate health, and there was a sad light in his large blue eyes which told of a thoughtful spirit longing within. His manners were gentle and retiring in the extreme.

'When did you come back, Johnnie?' Marjorie had asked after some previous conversation.

'Last night, by the express from London,' answered the young man. 'I'm going down to see the old folk to-night. Shall you be at the manse?'

Marjorie nodded, smiling gaily.

And how did you like London?' she demanded. 'Did you see the Queen?—and Westminster Abbey?—and did you go to the great Tabernacle to hear Spurgeon preach?'

'No, Marjorie. My time was short, and most of my spare time was spent among the pictures; but when I saw them, thousands upon thousands of masterpieces, it made me despair of ever becoming a painter. I thought to myself, maybe it would be better after all to bide at home, and stick to weaving like my father.'

As he spoke, Marjorie paused at the corner of a quiet street, and held out her hand.

'I must go to my lesson. Good-bye!'

'How are you going down? By the waggonette?'

'Yes, Johnnie.'

'So am I; so we can go together. Good-bye till then!'

And with a warm squeeze of the hand the young man walked away. Marjorie stood looking after him for a moment with a pleasant smile; then she turned and walked down the street. She had not many yards to go before she paused before a dingy-looking house, on the door of which was a brass plate with the inscription:

M. LÉON CAUSSIDIÈRE,
Professor of Languages.

She rang the bell, and the door was opened almost im-

mediately by a 'Scotch servant in petticoat and short gown, who greeted her with a familiar smile. Answering the smile with a friendly nod, Marjorie tripped along the lobby, and knocked at an inner door, which stood ajar. A clear musical voice, with an unmistakably foreign accent, cried 'Come in,' and she entered.

The room was a plainly furnished parlour, at the centre table of which a young man sat writing. The table was littered with writing materials, books, and journals, and on a smaller table in the window recess was another table, also strewn with books.

The young man, who was smoking a cigarette, looked up as Marjorie entered.

'Ah, it is you, Mademoiselle Marjorie!' he exclaimed, smiling pleasantly. 'I did not expect you so early, and I was just smoking my cigarette? You do not mind the smoke? No? Then, with your permission, I will smoke on!'

He spoke English fluently, though his accent was unmistakable, and his pronunciation of certain words peculiar. Personally he was tall and handsome, with black hair worn very long, black moustache, and clean-shaven chin. His forehead was high and thoughtful, his eyes bright but sunken, his complexion swarthy. He was dressed shabbily but somewhat showily in a coat of brown velvet, shirt with turn-down collar loose at the throat, and a crimson tie shapen like a true lover's knot. He carried a *pince-nez*, secured to his person by a piece of elastic, disused while writing or reading, but fixed on the nose at other times. Through this *pince-nez* he now regarded Marjorie with a very decided look of admiration.

'I came early, monsieur,' said Marjorie, 'because I cannot come in the afternoon. I am going home, and shall not be back in Dumfries till Monday. Can you give me my lesson now, please?'

'Certainly,' answered the Frenchman. 'I was only writing my French correspondence, but I can finish that when you are

gone. Will you sit there, mademoiselle, in the arm-chair? No? Then in this other. We will begin at once.'

Marjorie sat down and opened her books. The Frenchman, taking the arm-chair she had refused, regarded her quietly and keenly.

'Now, read, if you please,' he said, with a wave of the hand. 'Begin—where you left off yesterday.'

Marjorie obeyed, and read aloud in a clear voice from an easy French reading book. From time to time the teacher interrupted her, correcting her pronunciation.

'You advance, mademoiselle!' he said presently. 'Ah, yes, you are so quick, so intelligent. Now translate.'

In this portion of her task also the girl acquitted herself well, and when she had finished the young man nodded approvingly.

'Now let us converse—in French, if you please.'

But here Marjorie was at a loss, not knowing what to talk about. She finally took the weather as a topic, and advanced the proposition that it was a very fine day, but that there would soon be rain. Her master responded, and, urged to higher flights of imagination, Marjorie hoped that it would not rain till she reached home, as the public waggonette in which she was to travel was an open one, and she did not want to get wet. In this brilliant strain the conversation proceeded, Marjorie stumbling over the construction of her sentences, and getting very puzzled over the other's voluble answers when they extended to any length. But at last the lesson was over, and the teacher expressed himself well pleased.

'And now,' he said with a smile, 'we will talk the English again before you go. Will you tell me something more about yourself, mademoiselle? I have seen you so often, and yet I know so little. For myself, I am almost a recluse, and go about not at all. Tell me, then, about yourself, your guardian, your home.'

'I don't know what to tell you, monsieur,' answered Marjorie.

'Call me not "monsieur," but "Monsieur Léon." "Monsieur" is so formal—so cold.'

'Monsieur Léon.'

'That is better. Now answer me, if you please. You have no father, no mother?'

The girl's eyes filled with tears.

'No, Monsieur—'

'Monsieur Léon.'

'No, Monsieur Léon.'

'Ah, that is sad—sad to be an orphan, alone in the world! I myself have no father, but I have a mother whom I adore. And you live with your guardian always?'

'Yes, monsieur—Monsieur Léon! He is my guardian and my foster-father; and Solomon is my foster-father too.'

'Solomon?'

'Solomon is our clerk and sexton. He lives in the manse. He was living there when the minister found me, nearly seventeen years ago.'

The young Frenchman had arisen, and stood facing Marjorie Annan.

'Ah, yes, I have heard!' he said. 'And you have dwelt all these years, *mignonne*, alone with those two old men?'

'Yes, Monsieur Léon!'

'It is terrible—it is not right! You who are so young and pretty; they who are so old and dreary! And you have never seen the world—never travelled from your native land! Never? You have lived in a desert, you have never known what it is to live! But you are a child, and it is not too late. You will see the world some day, will you not? You will find someone to love you, to care for you, and you will bid adieu to this *triste* Scotland, once and for ever?'

As he spoke, very volubly, he bent his face close to hers, smiling eagerly, while his breath touched her cheek. She blushed slightly, and drooped her eyes for a moment; then she looked up quite steadily and said:

‘I should not care to leave my home. Mr. Lorraine took me to Edinburgh once, but I soon wearied, and was glad to come back to Annandale.’

‘Edinburgh!’ cried Monsieur Léon, with a contemptuous gesture. ‘A city where the sun never shines, and it rains, six days out of the seven, what you call a Scotch mist! You should see my country, *la belle France*, and Paris, the queen of the cities of the world! There all is light and gay; it is Paradise on earth. Would you not like to see Paris, Mademoiselle Marjorie?’

‘Yes, monsieur, maybe I should,’ replied Marjorie, ‘but I’m not caring much for the town. But I was forgetting something, though,’ she added; ‘Mr. Lorraine told me to give you this.’

So saying, she drew forth a small silk purse, and drawing thence two sovereigns placed them on the table.

‘Put them back in your purse, if you please.’

‘But I have not paid you anything, and I owe you for ten lessons.’

‘Never mind that, mademoiselle,’ answered the Frenchman. ‘Some other time, if you insist, but not to-day. It is reward enough for me to have such a pupil. Take the money and buy yourself a keepsake to remind you of me!’

But Marjorie shook her little head firmly as she answered:

‘Please do not ask me, Monsieur Léon. My guardian would be very angry, and he sent me the money to pay you.’

The Frenchman shrugged his shoulders.

‘Well, as you please; only I would not have you think that I teach you for the money’s sake—ah, no! You have brought light and sunshine to my heart in my exile; when you come I forget my sorrows, and when you go away I am full of gloom. Ah, you smile, but it is true!’

‘Good-bye, now, Monsieur Léon,’ said Marjorie, moving towards the door, for she felt embarrassed and almost frightened by the ardent looks of her teacher.

‘Good-bye! You will come again on Monday, will you not?’

‘Yes, Monsieur Léon.’

And Marjorie left the room and passed out into the sunny street.

Left to himself, the Frenchman threw himself into his chair, and covering his eyes with his delicate white hands, seemed to reflect deeply for some minutes. When he looked up again his eyes were full of eager, passionate light.

‘How pretty she is, how pure and sweet!’ he murmured to himself in his own tongue. ‘Though she is a child she has brought me to her feet; and I who used to say that I was sick of love, and cared only for Liberty and France! Every day that I look upon her I love her more. And she? Does she care for me, her teacher? Will she listen if I ask her to leave this gloomy land, and fly with me to a merrier home. The great change grows near—soon, perhaps I shall be no longer in exile—I can return, and I will not return *alone*.’

CHAPTER V.

HOMEWARD BOUND.

THE public waggonette in which Marjorie was to journey home ran daily between Dumfries and Annanmouth, a small seaside village much frequented in summer for its sea-bathing, and passed within half a mile of Mr. Lorraine’s abode, which was just six Scots miles away from Dumfries itself. The starting-place was the Bonnie Jean Commercial Inn, an establishment said to have been much patronised by the poet Burns during his residence in the south of Scotland; and hither Marjorie, after leaving her tutor, proceeded without delay.

The waggonette stood waiting at the door, and on the threshold—smiling, smart, and spruce—were the Misses Dalrymple, Maggie and Annie, the two severe maidens who kept the inn. Miss Maggie was about forty-five years of age, Miss Annie about forty; both were somewhat grim and aquiline of feature,

but simple, hospitable, and kindly. Miss Maggie dressed severely in sober colours, with little or no ornament of any kind; but Miss Annie, presuming upon her greater youthfulness, affected cheerful embellishments, had always a light kerchief in her bosom and gay ribbons in her cap.

At Marjorie's appearance their features grew radiant with friendliness.

'You're jest in time, Marjorie!' cried Miss Maggie. 'Tam has gane down for the post bag.'

'Come awa' ben,' said Miss Annie; 'you'll tak' something before you gang.'

So saying, they led her into a cosy parlour behind the bar or office, wherein the sisters presided over the hotel books and made up their accounts. Over the parlour mantelpiece was a picture in oil of Robert Burns, taken at the period of his physical decline, and looking worn, weary, and old; and in a small glass frame below was a kind of posy made of dried flowers, meadow grass, and ferns, with the inscription: '*Gathered at Mauchline, July, 18—.*'

The two good ladies placed Marjorie in the arm-chair, and while plying her with questions and amusing her with local gossip, looked at her with undisguised admiration; for they were not so sour of disposition as to regard a pretty face, even in one of their own sex, with anything but sympathetic admiration. Presently, after general topics were disposed of, Miss Annie said:

'Hae ye seen Johnnie Sutherland yet? He's back frae London.'

'Yes; and he's going down in the waggonette,' answered Marjorie.

Miss Annie exchanged a hurried glance with her sister, and smiled on Marjorie.

'He's a good lad and a clever,' she exclaimed. 'I mind the time when he and you gaed cleeking thegither to the school. Dae ye mind that, Marjorie?'

'I mind it fine,' answered Marjorie, with a slight blush. 'He was very good to me, and often helped me with my lessons.'

'And he wad draw yer picture all over his books!—dae ye mind *that*? Eh, Marjorie, he was awfu' fond o' ye when a bairn, and I'm thinking he's fonder o' ye noo he's a man.'

'Aye is he,' said Miss Maggie, with an affirmative nod of the head.

'He's like my own brother,' replied Marjorie simply.

The ladies of the inn exchanged another glance; then Miss Annie changed the subject.

'And hoo are ye getting on wi' the French, Marjorie? He's a strange man, yon Frenchman, and the toon's talk. They're saying he'd wad be rich if he had his rights, but that the Emperor has banished him frae France on account o' his poleetical opinions.'

'Yes, he has told me so,' replied Marjorie. 'I like him very much, he is so clever and so kind.'

'He hasna many scholars,' said Miss Maggie thoughtfully, 'and most o' them he has are lads. Hoo came *you* to gang till him, Marjorie?'

'I wanted to learn the French, and Mr. Lorraine saw his name in the paper; so it was settled that I should go to him for an hour a day, four days a week.'

At this moment Tam the driver appeared at the door, announcing that the waggonette was about to start; and Marjorie, after a kiss from each of the sisters, hastened to take her place. The vehicle was drawn by two powerful horses, and could accommodate a dozen passengers inside and one more on the seat of the driver; but to-day there were only a few going—three farmers and their wives, a sailor on his way home from sea, and a couple of female farm servants who had come in to the spring 'hiring.' All these had taken their seats, but John Sutherland stood by the trap waiting to hand Marjorie in. She stepped in

and took her place, and the young man found a seat at her side, when the driver took the reins and mounted to his seat, and with waves and smiles from the Misses Dalrymple, and a cheer from a very small boy on the pavement, away they went.

The highway ran out of the market town until it reached sunny fields, where the corn was sprouting, and the larks were singing, past pleasant stretches of meadow, quiet clumps of woodland, comfortable farms, with glimpses all along of the distant mountains of Kirkcudbrightshire, and occasional peeps of the waters of the Solway, sparkling in the sunlight. Tam the driver chatted merrily with his passengers as he cracked his whip and rattled along, and had a nod and a greeting for the driver of every vehicle that passed, whether it was a slow country waggon, or a doctor's smart dog-cart, or a minister's wife driving her pony-chaise. Meanwhile John Sutherland and Marjorie talked in a low voice together of old times; the girl happy, unconstrained, and little conscious of the admiration in the young man's earnest eyes.

At last they reached the cross-roads where John and Marjorie were to alight. They leapt out, and pursued their way on foot, the young man carrying a small hand valise, Marjorie still holding her school books underneath her arm.

How still and bright it was that afternoon of early spring! How fresh was the air, how blue and peaceful the quiet sky! Their way lay along a quiet country road, the banks of which were sprinkled thick with speedwells and primroses, while the hedges were tangled with wild rose bushes just preparing to bloom. Often in after years when trouble came, John Sutherland thought of that happy walk, of his own blissful thoughts and dreams, and of the pretty figure tripping so gracefully and talking so pleasantly by his side!

Presently they came to a two-arched bridge which spanned the Annan. They paused just above the keystone. The young man rested his valise on the mossy wall, and both looked thoughtfully down at the flowing stream. A heron, which was

playing Narcissus in a pool twenty yards below the bridge, standing with crooked neck in solemn contemplation of his own blue shade, opened his great wings leisurely and flitted slowly away.

'It's many a long year, Marjorie, since we first stood here. I was a bare-footed callant, you were a wean scarce able to run ; and now I'm a man, and you're almost a woman. Yet there's the Annan beneath us, the same as ever, and it will be the same when we're both old—always the same.'

Marjorie turned her head away, and her eyes were dim with tears.

'Come away,' she said, 'I cannot bear to look at it ! Whenever I watch the Annan I seem to see my mother's drowned face keeking up at me out of the quiet water.'

The young man drew closer to her, and gently touched her hand.

'Don't greet, Marjorie !' he murmured softly ; 'your poor mother's at peace with God !'

'Yes, Johnnie, I ken that,' answered the girl in a broken voice, 'but it's sad, sad, to have neither kith nor kin, and to remember the way my mother died—aye, and not even to be able to guess her name ! Whiles I feel very lonesome, when I think it all o'er.'

'And no wonder ! But you have those that love you dearly for all that. There's not a lady in a country more thought of than yourself, and wherever your bonnie face has come it has brought comfort.'

As he spoke he took her hand in his own, and looked at her very fondly ; but her own gaze was far away, following her wistful thoughts.

'You're all very good to me,' she said presently, 'Mr. Lorraine, and Solomon, and all my friends ; but, for all that, I miss my own kith and kin.'

He bent his face close to hers, as he returned :

'Some day, Marjorie, you'll have a house and kin of your own, and then——'

He paused blushing, for her clear, steadfast eyes were suddenly turned full upon his face.

'What do you mean, Johnnie?'

'I mean that you'll maybe marry, and——'

Brightness broke through the cloud, and Marjorie smiled.

'Marry? Is it me? It's early in the day to think of *that*, at seventeen.'

'Other young lasses think of it, Marjorie, and so must you. Our Agnes married last Martinmas, and she was only a year older than yourself.'

Marjorie shook her head; then her face grew sad again, as her eyes fell upon Annan water.

'I'm naebody's bairn,' she cried, 'and shall be naebody's wife, Johnnie.'

'Don't say that, Marjorie,' answered Sutherland, still holding her hand and pressing it fondly. 'There's one that loves you dearer than anything else in all the world.'

She looked at him again steadfastly, while his face flushed scarlet.

'I know *you* love me, Johnnie, as if you were my own brother.'

'More that *that*, Marjorie—more a thousand times!' the young man continued passionately. 'Ah! it has been on my mind a thousand times to tell you how much. Ever since we were little lass and lad you've been the one thought and dream of my life; and if I've striven hard and hoped to become a painter, it has all been for love of *you*. I know my folk are poor, and that in other respects I'm not a match for you, who have been brought up as a lady, but there will be neither peace nor happiness for me in this world unless you consent to become my wife.'

As he continued to speak she had become more and more and more surprised and startled. The sudden revelation of what so

many people knew, but which she herself had never suspected, came upon her as a shock of sharp pain; so that when he ceased, trembling and confused by the vehemence of his own confession, she was quite pale, and all the light seemed to have gone out of her beautiful eyes as she replied:

'Don't talk like that! You're not serious! Your wife! I shall be "naebody's wife" as I said, but surely, surely not yours.'

'Why not mine, Marjorie?' he cried, growing pale in turn. 'I'll work day and night, I'll neither rest nor sleep until I have a home fit for you! You shall be a lady!—O Marjorie, tell me you care for me, and will make me happy!'

'I do care for you, Johnnie, I care for you so much that I can't bear to hear you talk as you have done. You have been like my own brother and now——'

'And now I want to be something nearer and dearer. Marjorie, speak to me; at least tell me you're not angry!'

'Angry with you, Johnnie?' she replied, smiling again, and giving him both hands. 'As if I *could* be! But you must be very good, and not speak of it again.'

She disengaged herself and moved slowly across the bridge. He lifted his valise and followed her anxiously.

'I know what it is,' he said sadly, as they went on side by side together. 'You think I'm too poor, and you would be ashamed of my folk.'

She turned her head and gazed at him in mild reproach.

'Oh, how can you think so hardly of me! I love your mother and father as if they were my own; and as for your being poor, I shouldn't like you at all if you were rich. But,' she added gently, 'I like you as my brother best.'

'If I could be always even *that* I should not mind; but no, Marjorie, you're too bonnie to bide alone, and if any other man came and took you from me, it would break my heart.'

'What nonsense you talk!' she exclaimed smiling again. 'As if any other man would care. If I were twenty, it would be

time enough to talk like that ; but at seventeen—Oh, Johnnie, you almost make me laugh !

‘Tell me one thing,’ he persisted ; ‘tell me you don’t like any one better than you like me.’

‘I don’t like any one half so well, except, except—Mr. Lorraine.’

‘You are sure, Marjorie ?’

‘Quite sure.’

‘Then I’ll bide my time and wait.’

By this time the village was in sight, and they were soon walking along the main street, which was as sleepy and deserted as usual. Even at the tavern door not a soul was to be seen ; but the landlord’s face looked out from behind the window pane with a grim nod of greeting. A few houses beyond the inn Sutherland paused, close to a small one-storied cottage, in front of which was a tiny garden, laid out in pansy beds.

‘Will you come in, Marjorie ?’ he asked doubtfully.

Marjorie nodded and smiled, and without another word he opened the garden gate, crossed the walk, and led the way into the interior of the cottage.

CHAPTER VI.

THE WEAVER’S COTTAGE.

As they entered the door a loud humming sound came upon their ears, mingled with the sound of voices. Turning to the right, they found themselves on the threshold of a room, half parlour, half kitchen, at one end of which was a large loom, where an elderly man, of grave and somewhat careworn aspect, was busily weaving. Seated on a chair close to him was a girl of about fourteen, dressed in the ordinary petticoat and short-gown, and reading aloud from a book. At the other end of the

room, where there was an open ingle and a fire, an elderly matron was cooking.

Suddenly there was an exclamation from the latter, who was the first to perceive the entrance of the new-comers.

'Johnnie!' she cried, holding out her arms, and in another moment she had folded her son in her embrace, and was kissing him fondly.

The young girl rose smiling, book in hand; the man ceased his weaving, but remained quite still in his chair.

'Yes, here I am, mother; and I've brought company, as you see!'

'Hoo's a' wi' ye, Marjorie?' cried the matron, holding out her hand. 'It's a treat to see your bonnie face. Sit ye down by the fire.'

'Is that my son?' said the weaver in a deep musical voice, but without turning his head. His infirmity was now apparent—he was stone blind.

John Sutherland walked across the room, gave his sister a passing kiss, and placed his hand affectionately on the old man's shoulder.

'It's yoursel', my lad. I ken you noo. I feel your breath about me. What way did ye no write to tell us you were on the road hame?'

'I was not sure until the last moment that I could start so soon; but I jumped into the train last night, and down I came.'

'Who's alang wi' you?' asked the weaver, smiling. 'I'll wager it's Marjorie Annan.'

'Yes, Mr. Sutherland,' answered Marjorie, crossing the room and joining the little group. 'I met Johnnie in Dumfries, and we came home together.'

The weaver nodded his head gently, and the smile on his face lightened into loving sweetness.

'Stand close side by side,' he said, 'while I tak' a long look at baith o' ye.'

'While you look at us?' echoed Marjorie, in surprise.

'Aye, and what for no! Dinna think, because my bodily e'en are blind, that I canna' see weel wi' the e'en o' my soul. Aye, there you stand, lass and lad—my boy John and Marjorie Annan; baith fair, baith with blue e'en; John prood and glad, and Marjorie blushing by his side; and I see what you canna see—a light all roond and abune ye, coming oot o' the golden gates o' Heaven. Stand still a wee and hark! Do ye hear naething? Aye, but I can hear! A sound like kirk bells ringing far awa'.'

As he spoke he sat with shining face, as if he indeed gazed on the sweet vision he was describing. Marjorie grew red as fire, and cast down her eyes; for she was only too conscious of the old man's meaning, and remembering what had taken place that day she felt constrained and almost annoyed. John Sutherland shared her uneasiness, and to divert the conversation into other channels he spoke to his young sister, who stood smiling close by.

'What's the book in your hand, Jessie? You were reading out loud to my father when we came in.'

Jessie was about to reply, when the old man answered for her:

'It's jest Jamie Hogg's poems, John,' he said. 'She was reading me yon bonnie ballant about Kilmeny:

"Bonnie Kilmeny went up the glen,
But it wasna to meet Duneira's men,
Nor the rosy monk o' the isle to see—
For Kilmeny was pure as pure could be."

Pure and fair like Marjorie Annan. Marjorie, my bairn, I whiles think you maun hae talk'd wi' the fairy folk yoursel', for when ye speak it's like a sweet, sweet soond frae the spirit warl.'

'Lord forfen, gudeman!' broke in Mrs. Sutherland superstitiously.

But Marjorie, uneasy lest the old man's dreamy talk should again take an awkward turn, was determined to make her escape.

'Good-bye now, Mr. Sutherland,' she said, taking his hand

in hers, 'I must run home; Mr. Lorraine will be expecting me.'

And before any one could say a word to detain her, she was crossing the threshold of the cottage. Young Sutherland followed her as far as the garden gate.

'Marjorie,' he said, 'I hope you're not angry?'

'No, no,' she replied; 'but I wish your father would not talk as if we were courting, Johnnie. It makes me feel so awkward, and you know it is not true.'

'Old folk will talk,' said John Sutherland, 'and father only speaks out of the fulness of his heart. He is very fond of you, Marjorie.'

'I know that, and I of him—that is why it troubles me to hear him talk like that.'

There was a moment's pause; then Sutherland sadly held out his hand.

'Well, good-bye, just now. I'll be looking ye up at the manse.'

'Good-bye,' she answered. 'Come soon; Mr. Lorraine will be so glad to see you.'

So she hastened away, while Sutherland, with a sigh, stood looking after her. He had loved her so long and so silently, and now for the first time in his life he began to dread that she might not love him in return. To him, just then, it seemed as if all the world was darkened, the blue sky clouded, all the sweet spring weather touched with a wintry sense of fear.

Their friendship had begun curiously enough.

Sutherland's father, though only a poor afflicted man, had thoughts far above his station, was self-educated, and well read in the literature of his country. He had composed, in the Scottish Doric, poems which were noticeable for plaintive beauty and delicacy of epithet, and when a young man he had published a volume 'by subscription.' Articles had appeared in the leading journals highly eulogising both his talents and his character, and in thousands of Lowland homes the name of

'James Sutherland, the blind weaver poet,' was a household word.

So he was a proud man, and had taken great pains with the education of his children, especially that of his favourite son. As a boy, John Sutherland was always better dressed than boys of his own station, who went barefoot and comparatively neglected, and went to the best schools available; and at a very early age he had attracted the attention of the worthy minister of the parish. He had thus become acquainted with Mr. Lorraine's adopted daughter, who was brought up almost as a little lady, and speedily became attached to the weaver's quiet, bashful, gentle son, so different in his manners to the other children of the village.

The friendship, begun in infancy, had lasted through early youth, until Marjorie almost regarded John Sutherland, to use her own expression, as a 'brother,' and when the day came for the youth's departure to Glasgow University, where he was to complete his education, they had not separated without tears.

Very early Sutherland had exhibited a natural talent for drawing and painting, and during the three or four years he had spent in Glasgow he attended the art classes and cultivated his gift to the utmost. He drew well, and had a fine eye for colour, and it was the ambition of his life to become a painter by profession. Nowhere, perhaps save in Scotland, would it have been possible for a young man with such small means at his command to cultivate his natural talents so thoroughly; but he was patient, diligent, and self-sacrificing, and had worked wonders out of his scanty opportunities—so that, from being a comparatively friendless lad he had risen high in the world's esteem, and had awakened the sympathy of many persons powerful in the domain of Art.

He stood at the gate watching till Marjorie disappeared; then, with another heavy sigh, he turned back into the cottage.

Meantime Marjorie Annan hastened homewards, not a little troubled by the event of the morning. Fond as she was of her

old playmate, she could not acknowledge to herself that his abrupt confession of love had awakened any response in her heart. On the contrary, it had startled and frightened her to a degree she could not have conceived possible. If like other growing maids she had sometimes dreamed of a lover, her ideal had certainly never taken the shape of poor John Sutherland. She looked upon him as a sort of humble friend, even a brother, but that was all. Though several years her senior, he seemed to her only a boy, and the idea of being courted by *him*, of all people in the world, was absurd.

Yet, child as she was, she had woman's wit enough to perceive that the young man was terribly in earnest, that the situation was a delicate one, and that for the future the relations between them would have to be more or less altered. John Sutherland, avowedly her lover, with the full sanction and earnest hope of his father and mother, was a different person from her old friend, Johnnie, with whom she had no reserves, and whom she had all along regarded with the frank indifference of sisterly affection.

Leaving the village behind her, she soon came in sight of the old church, and there, leaning over the church gate, was Solomon Mucklebackit, with hair white as snow, and a figure bent nearly double with old age. But, old as he was, and grim as ever, his face brightened at Marjorie's coming, and his wrinkled cheeks were puckered up into the ghost of a smile.

'Here I am at last,' said Marjorie, nodding affectionately to him.

The ruling passion was still strong in Solomon, and he began to grumble.

'An hour late,' he muttered; 'what kept ye, Marjorie? The meenister thought ye had missit the waggonette.'

'I had a call to make in the village, Solomon.'

'Weel hurry in and get your tea before it's cauld,' returned Solomon; 'he's waiting on ye.' Then as she turned away he demanded querulously: 'Ye were to bring doon five pounds o'

black tea and a bottle o' sherry wine frae Cumstie the grocer's. Hae ye gotten them ?'

Marjorie shook her head.

'I forgot them in my hurry to get away. I'm so sorry ! But I'll write to-night, and they'll come over by the carrier to-morrow.'

Solomon grunted gloomily, while the girl crossed the road, opened the manse gate, and hastened to the house. She found the front door ajar, and, crossing the lobby, entered the very sitting-room whither she had been carried in the minister's arms seventeen years before. After all these years, the little parlour remained just the same, with scarcely an article of furniture added ; and there, in the arm-chair by the fire, was the minister, just the same, but older, weaker, and wearier. He looked up as she entered, and his mild blue eye grew soft with loving recognition.

CHAPTER VII.

AT THE MANSE.

MR. LORRAINE was now long past the great climacteric, and breaking fast ; indeed, so infirm had he become that he had more than once thought of retiring from the ministry altogether. Though his body was frail, however, his intellect was as bright as ever, and when Marjorie entered the study he was busily engaged in reading one of his favourite books.

He looked up with his kindly smile as his foster-daughter appeared.

'Is it you, my bairn ?' he said, as he came over and kissed her. 'Welcome home again ! Though you have been scarcely a week away, I have missed you sorely, and have been counting the days till your return.'

For some months past, I should now explain, Marjorie had

been accustomed to stay at a ladies' school in the neighbouring town from Monday till Friday of every week, returning each Friday afternoon, and remaining till the following Monday. This arrangement had been found necessary, as it was impossible for the girl to complete her simple education at home, and as the distance was too great for her to go to and fro daily without inconvenience.

'And what news have you got from the town?' continued the minister, as Marjorie, holding his hand in hers, sank into a chair at his side. 'How is Miss Carruthers? and how do you get along with your studies?'

'Miss Carruthers sends her compliments, and as she is called away to Edinburgh to see her sick sister, I am to bide at home for a week. A whole week, Mr. Lorraine!—and in May time! Oh, I am so glad!'

'So am I, my bairn,' said the minister. 'A week's rest will do you good, and it will do *me* good too, I hope, for I have been far from well since you went away. I had one of my old attacks on Tuesday, and have been obliged to keep the house.'

'You will be better now,' said Marjorie fondly 'I will nurse you!'

'Aye, aye; and the sight of your face and the sound of your voice will do me more good than the doctor. By the way, my bairn, I had one here to-day inquiring after you, and she will be here again this evening.'

'I know! Miss Hetherington of the Castle?'

'Yes, Miss Hetherington. It is strange, my bairn, how much interest the good lady takes in you—she who cares so little for any other living thing; and yet after all it is *not* strange, for my Marjorie is a favourite with high and low.'

The girl's face grew troubled as she answered:

'I hope, Mr. Lorraine, she won't be asking me up to the Castle; I feel so lonely there, and she—she frightens me sometimes! She has such strange ways, and the house is an awful place.'

'Well, well, you must be careful not to offend her, for she is a true friend.'

'I know she is very rich, and good too, but for all that I cannot bear to be alone in her company. I wonder why she likes to have me! She sits in her arm-chair looking at me for hours together, till sometimes I feel as if I could scream out and run away.'

'She is a strange woman,' said the minister, thoughtfully; 'but you have no reason to fear her. She takes a great interest in you, and in all that concerns you.'

'I know that, but——'

'Her eccentricities are only put on, I think, to conceal a heart that is truly kindly. You must try to humour her, my bairn, remembering how much she has done for you, and may yet do. Not that I would have you shape your conduct towards her by any sordid hope of future gain; no, no, that would be unworthy; but it is well, after all, to have so powerful a friend should anything happen to me.'

'Oh, don't speak like that!' exclaimed Marjorie, her eyes filling with tender tears. 'I cannot bear it.'

'I am an old man, Marjorie, and in the natural course of things must very soon be called to my account. Seventy and seventeen cannot walk together long! My pilgrimage is nearly at an end, your road lies long and bright before you. But there, we will not speak of that, for, indeed, I am not repining at my lot. These seventeen years, my bairn, you have been light and sunshine to our old dwelling. When you came, though I was an old man then, my heart leapt up again, and I seemed to take another lease of life; and when I go, I shall go in peace, remembering how good the Lord has been to me, who, but for your coming, might have died a lonely man.'

He ceased in some consternation, for Marjorie was sobbing, with the tears streaming down her cheeks, and at that moment Solomon Mucklebackit entered the room, hat in hand.

'What's wrong noo?' cried the sexton, looking sharply at the pair.

'Nothing, Solomon, my man,' said the minister mildly, 'only——'

'Dinna be flyting at the bairn, or preaching till her. I wonder at ye, meenister. Is it because she forgot to bring the message frae Cumstie the grocer?'

Mr. Lorraine burst out laughing; and then exclaimed, patting Marjorie affectionately on the head:

'You see, Marjorie, Solomon is as ready to take your part as ever, and even ere he kens your fault! He thinks I have been scolding you.'

Solomon gave a grunt.

'I think the bairn's wanting her tea, if you wish *my* opinion. Will I bring it in?'

'Aye; unless Mysie is there——'

'Mysie's up the toon,' replied the sexton, 'but the pot's infusing at the kitchen fire, and I'll fetch it in mysel.'

So saying he left the room, and soon returned carrying the tray, with teapot, cups, and saucers, a loaf of bread and butter. He set them down on the table, and then, as he passed Marjorie's chair, patted her on the shoulder.

'Dinna heed the meenister!' he whispered. 'He's auld, and getting grumpy!'

At this remark, which was perfectly audible, and indeed was intended to be, Mr. Lorraine laughed cheerfully again, and Marjorie, drying her eyes, caught the contagion of his merriment.

'Mr. Lorraine was *not* scolding me, Solomon!' she cried.

But Solomon, who was never to be conciliated by anything but sheer opposition, puckered up his face into a comical frown.

'Atweel, if he was, I warrant ye desairved it,' he said shortly. 'What way did ye forget the tea frae Cumstie's?'

And with another grunt he walked from the room, having

managed somehow, by his grim interference and oddity of demeanour, to dispel the temporary cloud of sad foreboding. Marjorie took off her hat and shawl, and, sitting at the table, began to pour out the tea, while Mr. Lorraine, forgetting his recent train of thought, questioned her anew about her doings in the town. Thus far they chatted cheerfully together, and shared the simple meal.

‘And how about the French, Marjorie?’ asked Mr. Lorraine presently. ‘Are you coming on?’

‘Very slowly,’ was her reply. ‘I find it hard to pronounce, and the verbs are a dreadful trouble—and the genders. It’s so hard to tell whether a thing is masculine or feminine, and I wonder how the French folk themselves can tell. I’m afraid I’ll never learn the French rightly.’

‘I never could master it myself, though after all, maybe, I never fairly tried; it’s a queer kind of tongue, like the chirping of birds, I’m thinking. What like is your teacher?’

‘Monsieur Caussidière! A handsome gentleman, with black hair and black eyes.’

‘A young man, Marjorie?’

‘Not old; but very grave and sad, as if he had had much trouble; and I think he has, for he is an exile, and cannot return to his native land.’

Her eyes were full of dreamy sympathy and pity, and as she spoke she seemed to summon up before her the Frenchman’s thoughtful face. Mr. Lorraine glanced at her sideways, with a certain gentle suspicion.

‘Has he any other scholars?’ he asked quietly.

‘Only myself out of our school. I go to his house for my lesson every forenoon. And he is very, very kind! He would scarcely take the fees. He said——’

But here Marjorie paused and blushed, for she suddenly remembered Caussidière’s words and ardent looks of admiration.

‘Well, what did he say?’

He said he was ashamed to take money for teaching, and then—then he talked about France, and how he longed to return, and how sad it was to be an exile. That was all!

Mr. Lorraine did not question any further, but seemed plunged in thought. He did not quite like the idea of this handsome Frenchman; indeed, he was old-fashioned and simple enough to have a low opinion of the morals of the whole French nation! But he kept his suspicions to himself, and quietly determined to make inquiries.

‘By the way, Marjorie,’ he said after a pause, ‘you know that your school fees are paid by Miss Hetherington?’

Marjorie nodded.

‘It was *her* wish that you should be taught the French. For my own part I never thought much of either the language or the people, but that may be my prejudice. Miss Hetherington thinks that every young lady should learn French. Curious the interest she takes in you!’

There was a noise at the front door, a sound of feet in the lobby.

Solomon entered abruptly.

‘She’s outside,’ he said. ‘Will I bring her hen?’

‘Who is outside, Solomon, my man?’

‘Wha but Mistress Hetherington, frae the Castle. The carriage is at the door, and she’s wrangling wi’ the driver.’

Mr. Lorraine rose feebly from his chair, while Marjorie nervously put down her cup and saucer and prepared to receive the visitor.

‘This way, mem!’ said Solomon; and immediately there entered the room a woman of middle height, with snow-white hair, leaning upon a staff or hand-crutch.

She had black piercing eyes, a complexion like alabaster, and her front teeth projected slightly over her under lip. Though she had the air of an old woman, and walked with a stoop, her face had scarcely a wrinkle, and her voice was deep and powerful.

Marjorie sprang up and stood trembling. Without a word, Miss Hetherington crossed the room and looked fixedly in the young girl's face.

'Weel, Marjorie Annan?' she said, in a strong Scotch accent.

'How—how do you do, Miss Hetherington?'

'As you see—weel enough not to complain. Stand still, and let me look at ye! There, you may kiss me if you like!'

Marjorie did not like, but she bent forward and touched the lady's frosty cheek.

'Did ye come doon in the waggonette? Nae need to answer, for I ken, and I ken who came along wi' ye! What's this between you and Johnnie Sutherland?'

Had a bomb exploded under her feet, Marjorie could not have shown more consternation. She stammered and blushed, and cast an appealing look at Mr. Lorraine.

'How's this Marjorie!' he said gently. 'You did not tell me that Johnnie had come back.'

'I'll swear she didna,' exclaimed Miss Hetherington, with a low harsh laugh. 'See hoo she blushes! The lad and she had a tryste in Dumfries, and came down together.'

Here Solomon, who stood at the room door looking on, thought it his duty to interfere.

'And what then? What if Johnnie Sutherland did convoy our Marjorie hame? There's nae haim in that, I'm thinking.'

'Hold *your* tongue, Solomon Mucklebackit,' said Miss Hetherington, with a sharp rap of her crutch upon the ground. 'Mind your own business!'

'It is my business,' retorted Solomon, doggedly. 'Marjorie, dinna heed her.'

'Solomon!' cried Mr. Lorraine, with a certain authority.

'Weel?'

'Be good enough to leave the room.'

The old man uttered a low snort of defiance, but immediately obeyed. Miss Hetherington took a chair close to the fireplace, and sat in it, leaning heavily on her crutch.

'Nae fool like an auld fool!' she muttered, looking at Mr. Lorraine, but referring to the refractory sexton. 'Between the twa o' ye, you're spoiling Marjorie Annan altogether.'

'I hope not,' returned the minister mildly, resuming his own seat. 'After all, too, Solomon is quite right. Johnnie and Marjorie are old friends.'

'All the parish kens *that*,' said the lady of the Castle. 'Come here, Marjorie, and dinna be feared—I'll no eat you! Look me in the face! Are you and Johnnie courting?'

Marjorie's face was scarlet, and she trembled violently.

'Oh, Miss Hetherington,' she cried, 'what do you mean?'

And she held out her hands to Mr. Lorraine, as if beseeching him to take her part.

'Really, Miss Hetherington,' he said, 'Marjorie is a child, and I am sure such nonsense as you speak of has never entered her head.'

'Nonsense, is it?' retorted the lady, with the same low, harsh laugh as before. 'Weel, it's the nonsense to which a' folk come early or late, gentle and simple, and trust me to ken better than either you or that idiot Solomon what young lasses are made o'. Do you think Marjorie Annan's made of stane or airn, and doesna ken a fair-favoured lad from a rowan tree or a milk coo?'

'I think she is too young for love-making,' returned the minister.

'Then you think wrang; it's never o'er early for a lassie to begin. As for Johnnie, I'll no say but what he's a decent lad and a modest, and he has talent as weel, the rogue, heaps o' talent, though he's only a weaver's son—eh, Marjorie, has he no?'

And as she looked at Marjorie there was no anger in her stern black eyes, rather a sort of grim-humoured sympathy. Seeing his foster-child's confusion, Mr. Lorraine attempted to give the conversation another turn.

'If young Sutherland has developed natural gifts, he has you

to thank for the opportunity. We all know how kind you have been to him.'

'Because I bought twa o' his pictures,' she retorted, with her characteristic and disagreeable laugh. 'I gave him fifty pound a-piece for them, the more fool I. One was a view o' the Castle frae the south, wi' a cuddie eating thistles in the foreground—a cuddie as big as a hippopotamus; the other was Marjorie hersel', wi' her lap full o' wild flowers, sitting by the side o' Annan water, and about as like *her*, by that token, as it was like Solomon Mucklebackit.'

'We always considered it an excellent likeness,' said Mr. Lorraine, good-humouredly.

'So it was,' cried Marjorie, impulsively; 'everybody said so.'

'And what everybody said must be true?' demanded the lady, with a sneer. 'Weel, likeness or no likeness, the lad has talent, as I said; and if he works hard, maybe he'll be able, some fine day, to paint a picture. So much for Johnnie Sutherland. Now we'll come to the business which brought me doon. I want Marjorie to come to me to-morrow and spend the day.'

The very proposal which Marjorie had dreaded! She opened her lips to give a trembling refusal, to frame some awkward excuse; but before she could say a word, Miss Hetherington continued with decision:

'I'll be expecting her early, say at ten. She can walk the distance, unless she's o'er idle; in that case I'll send the carriage to fetch her.'

'I am very sorry,' stammered Marjorie, 'but to-morrow——'

She paused, and glanced in supplication at her foster-father.

'The fact is,' said Mr. Lorraine, 'we had made other arrangements for to-morrow. Some other day maybe.'

Miss Hetherington's eyes flashed, and her crutch was sharply struck upon the floor.

'To-morrow, and no other day will suit *me*. I hae something to say to her that willna keep. Do you hear that, Marjorie?'

'Yea,' answered Marjorie timidly, 'but I have only just come home, and I would rather——'

Here Miss Hetherington rose abruptly from her chair.

'Come or stay!' she exclaimed. 'Please yourself,' Marjorie Annan; but if you stay at home the morn, you'll wait lang for another invitation.'

Eager not to give offence, Mr. Lorraine now interposed.

'If you wish it, Marjorie shall come!'

'Very weel,' said Miss Hetherington sharply; then, turning to the girl, she added, 'Will you walk, or shall I send the carriage?'

'I—I will walk,' returned Marjorie timidly, with the air of one doomed to condign punishment.

'Then I'll expect you at ten, and nae later. Now, gie me your arm to the carriage.'

Marjorie obeyed, and with a short 'Good day' to the minister Miss Hetherington left the room. By this time it had grown almost dark, and Solomon was waiting in the lobby with the church lanthorn.

'Will I show you a light, mem?' he asked, respectfully enough.

'No, I can see weel enough,' was the reply; and still leaning on Marjorie's arm the lady passed out of the hall door, crossed the garden, and found her carriage, an old-fashioned one-horse brougham, waiting at the outer gate. Assisted by Marjorie she stepped in, and Marjorie drew back.

'Marjorie!'

'Yes, Miss Hetherington.'

'Kiss me again, my bairn.'

Was it Marjorie's fancy, or was the voice that spoke quite different from the harsh voice that had so troubled her in the room! She bent down her face, and the lady's two hands were uplifted to draw it softly down for the farewell kiss. The lips that kissed her on cheek and forehead were cold as ice. It was no fancy, however, that the same gentle voice that she had just

heard—so softened, so changed!—spoke again, and in those words:

‘God bless you, Marjorie Annan!’

Then while Marjorie stood trembling and wondering, the lady of the Castle was driven rapidly away.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CASTLE AND ITS MISTRESS.

MISS MARGARET HETHERINGTON of Hetherington Castle was a spinster lady of great wealth, who inherited in her own right the estates that had once belonged to her father, and afterwards, for a short term, to a brother who died childless, leaving her the next of kin. For fifteen or sixteen years at least she had remained in solitary possession of the place; and during that time she had scarcely left the neighbourhood, save for a few weeks each winter, when she went to occupy a house—her town-house, as she called it—in the city of Edinburgh.

When local gossip first began to speak of the foundling who had been left on the manse doorstep, and who had been taken in so tenderly by the minister, Miss Hetherington was living at the Castle with her brother; and being a lady of somewhat stern virtue, she heard the news with a certain amount of moral indignation. A few Sundays afterwards she appeared at church, and after service questioned Mr. Lorraine, who told her all the circumstances, which interested her so much that she at once went to the manse and saw the child. On learning the minister's determination to rear the infant as his own, she at first inveighed bitterly against the wicked mother who had laid so heavy a burthen on the good man's slender means, and then, after a pitying look at little Marjorie, presented the minister with a fifty-pound note.

‘Dinna tell my brother I gave it to you,’ she said ; ‘he would think me a fool for my pains, and maybe I am !’

The minister promised to keep her charity private ; and from that day forth Miss Hetherington continued to take a friendly interest in the little castaway. Two years later her brother died, and she reigned supreme and solitary at the Castle. As time advanced, she grew more and more eccentric, more and more of a recluse ; but her interest in Marjorie did not cease, and she continued to assist the minister in his responsibility. Now and then, at long intervals, Marjorie was sent for to the Castle to spend a day or two in the stern lady’s company, and she never returned home without a handsome present. She never ceased, however, to regard her benefactress with a certain dread.

Thus the long years had passed away ; and now Miss Hetherington, though in reality little over fifty years of age, looked quite an old woman. She seemed to have no kinsfolks and fewer friends, but dwelt alone up at the Castle in utter solitude.

Early in the morning, after Miss Hetherington’s visit, Marjorie prepared to set out for the Castle. She would gladly have made some excuse to stay at home, but Mr. Lorraine would not hear of it, and at his earnest request she consented.

‘She is your best friend,’ said the minister, ‘and you must not offend her.’

‘Very well ; I will go,’ answered Marjorie ; ‘but I shall come home early in the afternoon. She’ll never ask me to stay all night ? If she does, I can’t do it.’

‘Why not, Marjorie ?’

‘The Castle’s eerie enough at daytime, but at night it’s dreadful, and Miss Hetherington creeps about like a ghost. I’d sooner sleep out in the kirkyard !’

At a quarter before nine she started, for she had three miles to walk, and she wished to linger on the road, which lay through pleasant country pastures and among green lanes. The morning was bright and clear, though there were clouds to seaward which spoke of coming rain. Passing up through the village, the way

she had come the previous day, she saw young Sutherland standing at the gate of the weaver's cottage.

'Good morning, Marjorie. Where are you going to so early?'

'Up to Miss Hetherington's at the Castle,' she replied.

'Are you going to walk?'

'Yes.'

'Then may I come with you a piece of the road?'

'Not to-day, Johnnie,' she said nervously. 'I am late, and must hurry on.'

The young man sighed, but did not press his request. Troubled and vexed at the meeting, Marjorie walked quickly away.

She followed the townward highway till she came to the cross-roads, where she had alighted from the waggonette. Close to the cross-road there was a stile leading to a footpath across the fields. Her foot was on the stile, and she was about to step over, when she heard a voice behind her. Turning quickly, she saw to her astonishment the French teacher from Dumfries.

He was clad in a dark walking suit, with broad-brimmed wideawake hat, and was smoking a cigar. He looked at her smilingly, and raised his hat. She thought he had never looked so handsome, as he stood there in the sunshine, with his pale face smiling and his bright black eyes fixed eagerly upon her.

'Monsieur Caussidière!' she cried in astonishment.

'Yes, it is I!' he replied, in his sad musical voice. 'I have walked from the town, and was going down to see you.'

'To see *me*?' she echoed.

'Yes, mademoiselle, and the good man your guardian. You have spoken of him so often that I longed to make his acquaintance, and having two idle days before me, I am here as you behold!'

Marjorie did not know what to say or do; the encounter was so unexpected. She stood trembling and blushing in such obvious embarrassment that the Frenchman came to her relief.

'Do not let me detain you if you have an appointment. Or

stay ! perhaps you will permit me to walk a little way in your company ?

And before she quite understood what was taking place, he had lightly leapt the stile, and was handing her over with great politeness. They strolled along the footpath side by side. Suddenly Marjorie paused.

‘I am going up to the Castle,’ she said, ‘and I shall not be back till the afternoon. Do not let me take you out of your way.’

The Frenchman smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

‘Oh ! one way is to me as good as another,’ he exclaimed.
said you wished to see Mr. Lorraine.’

‘Precisely ; but I prefer your company, my child.’

‘He is at home now, and will be so glad of some one to talk to.’

‘I see you want to get rid of me, little one,’ said Caussidière paternally. ‘If I go, will you promise to return soon ? Remember, I shall not depart until you do return.’

‘Yes, I will promise,’ answered Marjorie. ‘I—I would rather you did not come any further.’

‘And wherefore, my child ? Is my company so disagreeable ?’

‘No, monsieur ; but the folk in this place are aye talking, and if they saw me walking with a strange gentleman it would be all over the parish before night, and then Miss Hetherington would hear of it, and I should get no peace.’

And as she spoke she looked round nervously, as if dreading an eye-witness.

‘Miss Hetherington ! Pray, who is she ?’

‘The lady I am going to see. She has eyes everywhere—nothing happens but she kens.’

‘But surely there is nothing to conceal,’ persisted the Frenchman. ‘It is very natural that, having met you, I should offer to escort you.’

‘In France, maybe, but not here in Annandale. Down here,

monsieur, when two folks are seen out walking in the fields together all the world believes them to be *courting*.'

She had spoken without reflection, and her face now grew crimson as she met her companion's quiet eyes and realised the significance of her own words.

'I see,' cried the Frenchman laughing. 'They would take me for your lover.'

Marjorie did not reply, but turned her face away, and began to walk on rapidly. But the Frenchman kept at her side.

'Ah, my child,' he continued, 'I am more fit to be your father than your lover. I am not so frivolous and vain as to presume to think of one so young and pretty. You must not mind me! I am your teacher, your friend—that is all!'

She was touched by the tone in which he spoke, but after a moment's hesitation she paused again, and looked him full in the face.

'What you say is quite true, monsieur,' she said; 'but, oh! do not follow me any further. See! that is the Castle, and who knows but Miss Hetherington herself is watching us from the tower?'

She pointed across the fields and towards a dark belt of woodland, over which two old-fashioned towers were indeed visible, about a mile and a half away.

'Well, I will do as you desire, my child,' answered Causidière, after a moment's hesitation; 'I will go and make the acquaintance of your guardian. *Au revoir!*'

'*Au revoir, monsieur!*'

He took her hand, lifted it to his lips, and kissed it; then, with an air of respectful gallantry, he swept off his hat and bowed. She could not help smiling; he looked so fantastic to her simple sight, and yet so handsome!

She walked on thoughtfully. At the next stile she turned and looked back. He was still stationary in the pathway, gazing after her; but the moment she looked back he kissed his hand.

Marjorie turned again and walked on, with no little fluttering of the heart; the moment she was quite out of sight she slackened her pace and began thinking.

The last twenty-four hours had been full of surprises for the simple girl. She was beginning to realise, for the first time in her life, the curious sensation, confused yet delightful of being loved and admired—and not by one man only, but by two; for there could be no mistaking the French master's tender solicitation, though it had not been expressed in words.

Child as she was, Marjorie felt rather frightened. Young Sutherland's feelings towards her she could understand—he had known her so long, and they had always been such friends; and though she could hardly look upon him in the light of a lover, yet his passionate outburst had not taken her altogether by surprise.

With Monsieur Caussidière it was different.

He seemed so far away from her, so much her elder and superior. Doubtless, had she been a romantic girl, given to dreaming or novel-reading, she would have been fascinated by his admiration; for he was very handsome, and interesting to boot. But she was not particularly romantic, and her feeling towards him was a peculiar mixture of awe, terror, and amusement. She was afraid of him, firstly, because he was a foreigner, and secondly, because he was so clever; amused by him, because he was so entirely different, both in character and manners, from all the men she had ever met. It seemed absurd to think that he could seriously care for a child, a school-girl, like herself.

Troubled and perplexed, she crossed the fields, and reaching a lonely road, came into the dark shadow of the woods which surrounded Hetherington Castle. Following the road for about a hundred yards, she reached a dilapidated and uninhabited lodge, standing at the end of a grass-grown avenue. Pushing open a rusty iron gate, she entered the avenue and wandered on with gloomy woods on either side. Deep sylvan silence surrounded her, broken only by the twittering of small birds and the occa-

sional coo of a stock-dove. From time to time a wood-pigeon crossed the blue open space above her head, and conies, like elfin things, gambolled in the grass before her, saw her coming, and vanished away. Wild flowers of the spring-time, speedwells and primroses, grew thick on the sides of the avenue, and everywhere, save where old ruts showed where vehicles once had passed, there was a carpet of long grass and soft many-coloured moss.

At last, turning a corner and coming out into open sunshine, she saw the Castle standing in the midst of a broad piece of pasture where cows were grazing. It consisted of a two-storied building, attached to the two old ivied towers. The edifice itself, as well as the pasture in front of it and the walled garden behind it, looked forlorn and neglected. Rank grass and weeds grew almost to the very threshold, and the walls were disfigured with great mildew-like stains.

Approaching nearer, she came to another carriage road, which swept right up to the main entrance. She passed along the front of the house, and came to the hall door, which stood wide open. Close to her hand was a brass handle communicating with a rusty bell; she reached out her hand and rang, and the bell sounded a hollow jangling, dismal sound.

She waited, no one came; then she rang again, more loudly.

In answer to the second peal, she heard shuffling footsteps along the lobby; then a hard-featured elderly man-servant, dressed in rusty black, appeared on the threshold, and gave her a nod of gloomy recognition.

'It's *you*, Miss Marjorie!' he said. 'What way did ye no come ben without ringing? *She's* waiting on ye.'

So saying he led the way into the lobby, a dark and dreary passage hung with oil paintings and antique maps and prints; thence into a large apartment, divided by an open folding door into two portions. Old family portraits covered the walls, the suite was of old-fashioned oak and crimson velvet, the oaken floor strewn with loose pieces of carpet, rugs, and skins of deer

and foreign animals. On the tables were books—old keepsakes, county histories, albums of prints. There were heavy curtains to the windows, which looked out on the pasture or paddock described above.

In the further room was a large mantelpiece of black marble, cracked across; on the mantelpiece an old-fashioned clock, with a bronze figure of Wallace in complete armour; and above this hung a dingy oil painting of the last Master of Hetherington, booted and spurred, in his costume as leader of the Annandale Hunt. A faint fire burned in the grate, and lying before it, on a rug of black bearskin, was a deerhound, old and toothless.

As Marjorie entered, the dog rose snailing and showing his toothless gums, but recognising her, he gave a faint wag of the tail and sank down again to doze.

‘Bide here,’ said the old servant. ‘She’s up in the tower. I’ll tell her you’re come.’

And he shuffled from the room. Left alone in the chamber, Marjorie looked around her nervously. The place was dark and cheerless enough to make a strange frame for her young and glowing beauty. The faces on the walls looked down on her gloomily, that of the late master wearing a particularly forbidding expression. It was that of a man in the prime of life, with dark piercing eyes like his sister’s, a coarse, fierce mouth, and straight black hair. The original, when living, had been notorious for his life of reckless dissipation, which had laid him low when he had only just attained his fortieth year.

Presently the room door opened, and the mistress of the house appeared.

She was dressed in an old-fashioned robe of stiff black silk, and wore a cap, like that of a widow, over her snow-white hair. She came in leaning on her crutch, and nodded grimly to her guest.

‘Sit ye doon,’ she said, pointing to a seat, and herself dropping into an arm-chair before the fire. Then drawing out a

man's gold hunting watch and opening it, she continued, 'Twenty-five minutes after ten. You're late in coming, Marjorie Annan. I doubt you were lingering on the way.'

CHAPTER IX.

THE BAR SINISTER.

As she spoke, and closed her watch sharply, Miss Hetherington fixed her black eyes keenly on Marjorie, who, remembering her recent encounter with Caussidière, flushed red and trembled. A curious smile grew upon the stern woman's bloodless face as she continued :

'Aye, aye, you were lingering, and maybe you had pleasant company ! Who was yon you parted with out there among the green fields ?'

Marjorie started in consternation. Her fears, then, were right, and it was useless to conceal anything from Miss Hetherington, who was like a witch, and had eyes and ears everywhere.

'O, Miss Hetherington,' she exclaimed, 'did you see us together ?'

'I was up on the tower wi' my spying glass, and I saw far awa' a lassie that looked like Marjorie Annan and a lad I took at first for Johnnie Sutherland, till he began booing and kissing his hand, and then I saw it couldna be Johnnie.'

Marjorie now perceived that all concealment was useless, and at once told her hostess of the meeting with her French teacher. She did not think it expedient, however, to describe with exactness the Frenchman's conversation ; but even as it was Miss Hetherington's brow darkened, and her eyes flashed with a light like that of anger.

'Braw doings !' she muttered. 'Braw doings for a young growing lassie o' seventeen. Your French teacher, say you ? What's his name, Marjorie ?'

'Monsieur Caussidière.'

'And what's the man doing down here instead of teaching his classes in the town?'

'Indeed I can't tell,' returned Marjorie. 'I met him quite by accident on my way to see *you*.'

'Humph! What like is he? Is he young?'

'Not very young.'

'Weel favoured?'

'Yes; and very clever.'

'Worse and worse,' said Miss Hetherington. 'Now, Marjorie, listen to me.'

'Yes; Miss Hetherington.'

'Look me in the face while you answer. Do you think this French scoundrel—he is a scoundrel, tak' it for granted—has come down here in pursuit o' his pupil? Dinna be feared to answer. Is he fond o' you, Marjorie?'

'I—I think he likes me.'

'Has he said as muckle?'

'Yes, Miss Hetherington,' answered Marjorie, who was incapable of a falsehood.

'And *you*? What think ye of him?'

'I like him very much, Miss Hetherington. He has been very kind and patient with me.'

'But do you *love* him, tell me that? or is it Johnnie Sutherland that has won your silly heart? Out with it, Marjorie Annan. Frank confession's good for the soul, and I'm your friend.'

Marjorie blushed, but kept her frank blue eyes fixed on her questioner's face.

'I don't love anybody, Miss Hetherington—not in the way you mean.'

'Are you sure o' that?'

'Quite sure.'

'Then you're a wise lassie,' cried the lady, rising to her feet. 'Men are kittle cattle, and safer at a distance. Look at that

picture,' she continued, suddenly pointing to the portrait over the mantelpiece. 'You ken who it is ?'

'Yes ; your brother, Mr. Hugh.'

'Hugh Hetherington, God rest his soul ! and the best brother woman ever had. Folk thought that he was bad, and he had my father's temper ; but he guarded his sister like a watch-dog ; and I wish *you* had a brother to guard you half as weel. Look underneath my een, on my right cheek ! You see that mark ? I shall carry it to my grave. Hugh gave it to me when I was a young lass ! He struck me in the face wi' his fist, because he thought I was hiding something from him, and coorting wi' one I needna name.'

The lady's face grew full of a wild, fierce light as she spoke, and she laughed strangely to herself. Marjorie gazed at her in dread.

'It was a lie, but Hugh was right ; he loved his sister. He kenned what men were, he knew their black hearts. They're a' bad, or mostly a'. Tak' warning, Marjorie Annan, and hearken to me ! Let nae man come to you in secret, wi' words o' love ; hide naething from them that care for you, from Mr. Lorraine or from me. Trust the auld heads, Marjorie ; they ken what is right. God has made you bonnie ; may He keep you pure and happy till the end !'

Her tone had changed to one of deep earnestness, even of pathos. She walked up and down the room in agitation, pausing now and again, and leaning upon her crutch.

'No that I would hae you lead a lonely life !' she exclaimed after a pause. 'Look at me ! I'm no that old in years, but I'm grey, grey wi' loneliness and trouble. I might hae had one to care for me ; I might hae had bairns ; but it wasna to be. I'm a rich woman, but I hae neither kith nor kin. Lord forbid you should ever be the same ! But when you marry, and marry you will some day, you must choose a true man ; aye, true and honest, whether he be rich or poor, and if you canna choose, let the auld folk that care for you, and that ken the world, choose

for you. Trust their een, no your ain ! Never deceive them ; keep nae secrets from them ! Mind that, Marjorie Annan !

She ceased her tirade, and stood gazing keenly at Marjorie, who sat still, listening in wonder. Despite her sharp tone and brusque manner, there was a tenderness in her tone that could not be mistaken. Then all at once, with the abruptness peculiar to her, she changed her tone again, and broke into a low chuckling laugh.

‘And now I hae preach’d my sermon,’ she said, with her grim smile, ‘hae you had breakfast ? Will you tak’ some tea ?’

But Marjorie had breakfasted before starting, and wanted nothing.

‘Very weel ! Come and walk in the garden !’

She led the way from the room, and Marjorie quietly followed.

Passing out by the rear of the house, across a lonely courtyard, they reached a door in the high wall, and entered the garden—a wilderness of fruit trees, shrubs, and currant bushes, sadly in need of the gardener’s hand. Tangled creepers and weeds grew over the grassy paths. Here and there were seats, and in one corner was an arbour almost buried in umbrage. It was a desolate, neglected place, but the sun was shining upon it, and the air was bright and warm.

Miss Hetherington took her companion’s arm and walked slowly from path to path.

‘The garden’s like its mistress,’ she said presently, ‘lonesome and neglectit. Since Wattie Henderson died, I hae never employed a regular gardener. But it’s bonnie in summer time, for a’ that, and I like it, wild as it is. I should like weel to be buried here, right in the heart o’ the auld place !’

She entered the neglected arbour and sat down wearily. Marjorie stood looking at her in timid sympathy, while she pursued the dreary current of her thought.

‘Folk say I’m mean, and maybe I am ; but it’s no that ! I’m the last o’ the Hetheringtons, and it’s right and fitting that the

place should waste awa' like mysel'. But I mind the time weel—it's no sae lang syne—when it was gladsome and merry. Everything was in grand order then, and my father kept open house to the gentry. Now a's changed! Whiles I wonder what will become o' the auld house when I'm ta'en. Strangers will come maybe and turn it upside doon. What would *you* dae, Marjorie Annan, if you were a rich leddy and mistress o' a place like this?

The question came so abruptly at the end of the long string of lamentations, that Marjorie scarcely knew what to reply. She smiled awkwardly, and repeated the question.

'What would I *do*, Miss Hetherington?'

'Aye. Come!'

'I cannot tell, but I don't think I could thole to live here all alone.'

'Aye, indeed? Would you *sell* the Castle, and pooch the siller?'

'No, Miss Hetherington. I should like to keep what my forebears had owned.'

The lady nodded her head approvingly.

'The lassie has sense after a'!' she exclaimed. 'Aye, aye, Marjorie, you're right! It's something to belang to the line o' the Hetheringtons, and the auld lairds o' the Moss would riae in their graves if they kenned that strangers were dwelling on the land. Did I ever tell ye how our line began, Marjorie?'

'No, Miss Hetherington.'

'Weel, I'll tell you now. Sometimes I smile to mysel' to think it o'er; for, proud as our folk hae been, we began wi' a bar sinister. Ken you what that is, Marjorie? Weel, it's *this*. Our ancestor, Hugh Hetherington, was a bastard son o' Mary Montgomery, one o' Queen Mary's women, and folk said (I'm thinking it was true!) the great Earl o' Bothwell was his father! That was the way we began,' she continued, with her dry sarcastic laugh; 'and what then? Folk thought little o' a bar sinister in those days; and if you were to trace back half the

proud families o' Scotland to their beginnings, you'd find that few or none began wi' the Kirk's blessing and a wedding-ring !

The theme was a curious one to pursue before so young a girl, but Miss Hetherington, for some reason or other, seemed to find peculiar interest in it. It was strange indeed to hear the lady of the Castle, who was notorious for her pride of birth and place, and who looked down on nearly all her neighbours as inferiors, actually making a laughing-stock of her own family tree.

'I have seen the Earl of Bothwell's picture in a book,' said Marjorie. 'He was dark and handsome, like your brother, Mr. Hugh.'

Miss Hetherington rose suddenly to her feet and took Marjorie by the arm.

'Say you that?' she exclaimed. 'Come wi' me, and I'll show you something.'

They crossed the garden together, passed through the door in the wall, and walking across the court-yard approached the more ancient part of the Castle. Between the two towers was an arch with a heavy oaken gate, which stood half open. Miss Hetherington passed in, followed by Marjorie. Passing through a narrow door to the right, they ascended a dark flight of stairs, and paused on a stone landing before a door of black oak. Miss Hetherington drew from her pocket a large old-fashioned key and opened the door. They entered, and found themselves in a small apartment, circular like the tower of which it formed a part, and faintly lit by a high narrow window.

The floor was stone as well as the wall ; but at one side of the room stood a large mahogany bed, with curtains of crimson and gold, worm-eaten and torn. Over an open fireplace, without a grate, there hung an old oil painting in a frame of tarnished gold.

'See there !' said the lady, pointing to the picture.

Marjorie looked, and started in wonder. It was the picture of a man in complete armour, leaning on a heavy two-handled

sword. The flesh tints of the face were faded, leaving the countenance of death-like pallor; but out of the face, underneath the iron-grey hair just peeping from the helm, looked two black burning eyes, just like the eyes of the picture in the drawing-room. The semblance extended to the hard, coarse mouth, the knitted brows, the heavy, determined chin.

‘It is Mr. Hugh!’ cried Marjorie.

‘It was painted, Marjorie, many a long year before my brother Hugh was born or thought o’. It’s Bothwell himself!’

‘The great Earl of Bothwell!’

‘Aye, and nae other,’ said the lady, gazing thoughtfully upward at the picture. ‘Bothwell, the Queen’s husband, and Mary Montgomery’s lover. He loved Mary Montgomery till ambition gript him, and he sprang up like a wild beast to seize the Queen and the Crown. Mary Montgomery died heart-broken they say; but the grim Earl didna forget her son. And out o’ that bar sinister sprang the Hetheringtons o’ Annandale.’

CHAPTER X.

CAUSSIDIÈRE AND JOHN SUTHERLAND.

EARLY in the afternoon, after a dismal lunch, *tête-à-tête* with Miss Hetherington, Marjorie returned home across the fields.

She was glad enough to escape from the gloomy house, and the equally gloomy conversation of its eccentric mistress; but she was sensible enough to feel that the great lady’s interest in her was sincere and deep, and that the strange confidences of that day had their source in real sympathy and kindness of heart. Nevertheless, it was with a sigh of relief that she left the dark woods behind her, and came out again upon the pleasant meadows.

The sun was just beginning to sink as she passed through the

village and approached the manse. As she did so she saw Mr. Lorraine standing inside the churchyard gate in quiet conversation with the French teacher.

She entered the churchyard and joined them, the Frenchman saluting her with lifted hat as she approached.

'Ah, Marjorie, my bairn,' said the minister, 'you are home early. Did you walk back? I thought you would have stayed later, and that Miss Hetherington would have sent you home in the carriage after gloaming.'

Marjorie glanced at Caussidière, and met his eyes.

'She did not wish me to stay,' she answered, 'and I was glad to escape. But I see you and Monsieur Caussidière have made friends! I met him on the way, and he said he was coming here.'

'So he has told me,' said Mr. Lorraine. 'I have just been showing him over the kirk and through the graveyard, and now I have invited him to take pot-luck, as the English call it, this evening.'

'But it is so late, monsieur,' said Marjorie. 'How will you get back to Dumfries?'

'Did you not know?' returned the Frenchman smiling, 'I am taking a leetle holiday, like yourself! I have engaged a bed at the inn, and shall not return till the beginning of the week.'

They passed through the churchyard gate, and crossing the road approached the manse, Mr. Lorraine leading the way. Since her conversation with Miss Hetherington, Marjorie was more constrained than ever with the Frenchman, whose manner had entirely changed—from one of thoughtful respect to another of glad assurance. In her own mind she heartily wished he had not come. But there he was, already in favour with her guardian, and she knew not what to say.

They entered the manse together, and Caussidière joined them at their simple evening meal. At a whispered command from the minister, Marjorie ran into the kitchen and assisted



Mysie Simpson to prepare tea, ham and eggs, and warm scones ; and when they were ready she carried them in with her own hands.

Meantime Caussidière talked gaily with the minister, who seemed delighted with his company. He had travelled a good deal, was well acquainted with Latin literature, had known (or said he had known) many of the notabilities of his own country, and was altogether a man of information. He soon drew the minister out on his pet subjects—Scottish history and antiquities—and listened to him with great respect and deference. Mr. Lorraine was charmed, and forgot all about his simple suspicions when the Frenchman's name had been mentioned that morning.

Marjorie soon caught the contagion of so bright and congenial a presence. She listened delighted while Caussidière rattled on. To her, as well as to the minister, their guest seemed a being from a brighter world.

When they touched on French politics, as was inevitable, Caussidière had a dark picture to draw of the French Empire, and his own persecution under it.

'The Emperor is a bandit,' he exclaimed, 'and he is stupid, look you, into the bargain. When the time comes—and it is near—he will fall like an idol from its pedestal, and then the world will wonder he was endured so long.'

'Yet they tell me,' said Mr. Lorraine, 'that France was never so prosperous as under his rule.'

'Believe me, it is not true. He has beautified a death's head, he has made Paris a temple of pleasure, but at what a price ! There is no purity, no morality, now, in my unhappy country ; the tree is poisoned to the very roots. You, monsieur, who are a man of religion, will agree with me that the safeguard of a country is the sacredness of its domestic life, the holiness of its family ties ! *Eh bien*, he, the Emperor, has destroyed these. In Paris, there is nothing but iniquity ; in the country at large, only ignorance and love of gold. What is a little temporal pros-

perity compared with that social purity which is so much more precious than all the riches of the world ?

Words of wisdom truly, thought the simple minister, and beautiful as coming from the mouth of so young a man. And he had been taught to think all Frenchmen so frivolous, so immoral even. He listened benignly, taken quite captive by the other's eloquence.

When tea was over they sat round the hearth. The minister lit his pipe and his guest a cigar. They were chatting pleasantly together when Solomon Mucklebackit, who had been up the village on some household errand, quietly entered.

'Johnnie Sutherland's at the door. Will you see him ?'

Marjorie started, for she had an instinctive dread of a meeting between the two young men ; but the minister at once replied :

'Show him in, Solomon ;' and as the sexton disappeared he said to his guest, 'A young friend of ours and a schoolfellow of my foster-daughter.'

The next moment Sutherland appeared. A look of surprise passed over his face as he saw the stranger, who rose politely, but, recovering himself, he shook the minister warmly by the hand.

'Welcome, Johnnie,' said Mr. Lorraine. 'Take a seat. Do you know Monsieur Caussidière ? Then let me introduce you.'

Sutherland nodded to the Frenchman, who bowed courteously. Their eyes met, and then both looked at Marjorie.

'Monsieur Caussidière is my French teacher,' she said smiling.

Sutherland looked somewhat puzzled, and sat down in silence. After an awkward pause the minister began questioning him on his London experiences ; he replied almost in monosyllables, and was altogether so bashful and constrained that Marjorie could not avoid drawing an unfavourable comparison in her own mind between him and the fluent Frenchman.

'An artist, monsieur ?' said the latter presently, having gathered the fact from some of Mr. Lorraine's questions. 'I used to paint when I was a boy, but, finding I could not excel,

I abandoned the attempt. To succeed in your profession is the labour of a life, and alas ! so many fail.'

'That's true enough,' returned Sutherland, 'and when I see the great pictures I despair.'

'He paints beautifully, monsieur,' cried Marjorie, eager to praise her old friend. 'Does he not, Mr. Lorraine ?'

The minister nodded benignly.

'Ah, indeed,' said Caussidière, with a slight yawn. 'The landscape, monsieur, or the human figure ?'

'I have tried both,' replied Sutherland. 'I think I like figure painting best.'

'Then you shall not go far to find a subject,' exclaimed Caussidière, waving his hand towards Marjorie. 'Ah, if I was an artist I would like to paint mademoiselle. I have seen such a face, such eyes, and hair in some of the Madonnas of the great Raphael.'

Marjorie cast down her eyes, then raised them again, laughing.

'He *has* painted me, and more than once ; but I'm thinking he flattered the sitter. Miss Hetherington has one of the pictures up at the Castle.'

Caussidière fixed his eyes suspiciously upon Sutherland.

'Do you work for pleasure, monsieur, or for profit ? Perhaps you are a man of fortune, and paint for amusement only.

The question tickled the minister, who laughed merrily.

'I am only a poor man,' answered Sutherland, 'and paint for my bread.'

'It is an honourable occupation,' said Caussidière emphatically, though not without the suspicion of a covert sneer. 'At one time the artist was neglected and despised ; now he is honoured for his occupation, and can make much money.'

The minister looked at Sutherland with a mild air of friendly patronage.

'Johnnie is almost self-taught,' he said, 'and has pursued his art against great difficulties. Why, it seems only yesterday that

he was a wee callant, hanging round the house for his playmate—our Marjorie. I always thought you cleverer than the rest, Johnnie, and knew you had a soul above weaving! Besides your father is a gifted man, and you inherit his love for the beautiful.’

Sutherland did not reply. He felt the Frenchman’s eyes fixed upon him, and he could not resist a certain feeling of irritation. To tell the truth, he was still puzzling his mind as to the meaning of the other’s presence there, and wondering if it was in any way connected with Marjorie. And in Caussidière’s manner, despite its studied politeness, there was an indescribable air of superiority, even of patronage, which he was beginning to resent.

The conversation continued by fits and starts, but Sutherland’s appearance seemed to have quite destroyed the gay freedom of the little party. At last Solomon reappeared, and grimly announced that it was nine o’clock.

‘We keep early hours,’ explained Mr. Lorraine, ‘and are all abed at ten o’clock.’

‘Then I will go,’ cried Caussidière rising, ‘but I shall call again. It is not often, in Scotland, one finds such pleasant company.’

‘I will wish you good-night,’ said the minister, ‘unless before you go you would like to join us in family worship? Perhaps, however, being a French gentleman, you do not belong to our faith?’

‘I am a staunch Protestant,’ replied Caussidière with a curious smile; ‘and I will join you with pleasure.’

Sutherland decided to stay too, and when Mysie had been summoned from the kitchen the little group, including her and Solomon, sat round the table, while Mr. Lorraine, with Bible and hymn-book before him, conducted evening prayer. A simple hymn was sung, a chapter read, and then all knelt down, while the minister prayed aloud.

During the whole ceremony, whenever Marjorie glanced at

Caussidière, she found his eyes ardently fixed upon her—a fact which disturbed in no slight measure the fervency of her devotion. Once or twice Sutherland intercepted this look, and his liking for the Frenchman, lukewarm from the beginning, sank down to zero.

When all was done, ‘good-night’ was said and hands were shaken. Caussidière shook the minister’s hand cordially, and favoured Marjorie with a warm and lingering pressure, which left her more disturbed than ever. Then the two men walked out of the house together.

Solomon Mucklebackit shut the door behind them, and stalked into the sitting-room, where Marjorie and her guardian were standing, ready to retire for the night.

‘Wha’s yon black-nebbit French parrot?’ he demanded abruptly.

The black ‘neb’ was a figurative allusion to Caussidière’s moustache.

‘Do you mean Monsieur Caussidière?’ said the minister mild’y. ‘Solomon, my man, be good enough to speak of him more respectfully.’

Solomon gave his customary snort of defiance.

‘Wha is he, meenister? What brings him doon here?’

‘He is a French teacher of languages, Solomon, and Marjorie is his pupil.’

‘I dinna like him!’ cried the sexton decisively.

‘Come, come, Solomon!’

‘I’m telling ye I dinna like him! I saw him grinning to himsel’ when you were reading oot frae the Book. He was laughin’ at ye, meenister!’

Here Marjorie broke in good-humouredly—

‘What ails you to-night, Solomon! I’m sure he is a pleasant gentleman, and a kindly.’

‘Certainly,’ said Mr. Lorraine, ‘and one of extraordinary information.’

‘Information,’ repeated Solomon contemptuously, ‘I tell you

what it is, meenister, if I saw a carle like yon hinging roon the hoose after dark, I'd—I'd—deil tak' me if I wouldna *lock up the spoons* !'

And with this unexpected thunderclap, delivered with angry eyes and sonorous voice, Solomon Mucklebackit stalked out of the room, as he had entered it, refractory and determined.

Marjorie and the minister looked at each other in astonished perplexity, and then both forced a laugh. They were used to Solomon's ebullitions, which became more frequent as he grew older. Still, his angry words, ungracious and unreasonable as they were, did not fail to awaken uncomfortable feelings in them both.

* * * * *

Caussidière and Sutherland walked up the village side by side in the light of the moon, which was then at the full.

'You are a native of this place, monsieur ?' said the Frenchman, after a long silence.

'Yes,' was the quiet reply.

'A charming place! and the people still more charming! You have known our old friend a long, long time ?'

'Ever since I can mind.'

'And his daughter—his foster-daughter, I should say. I have heard her story; it is romantic, monsieur; it touches my heart. Do you think her pretty ?'

Sutherland started at the question, which was made with apparent nonchalance, but in reality with eager suspicion. He was silent, and the other continued :

'She is not like one of common birth; she has the grace of a lady. I was struck with her elegance when she first came to me for lessons. Poor child! To have neither father nor mother, to be a castaway! It is very sad.'

'She is happy and well cared for,' sturdily answered Sutherland, who didn't like the turn the conversation was taking; 'and she has many true friends.'

'Yourself among the number, I am sure?' said Caussidière quickly.

'You are right there, at any rate,' returned Sutherland; he added coldly, 'I wish you good-night.'

He stood before the gate of his father's cottage and held out his hand; the Frenchman, however, did not attempt to take it, but kept his own hands in his coat pockets as he returned a polite 'Good-night.'

Caussidière strolled on till he heard Sutherland enter the cottage and close the door; then he returned, and stood listening at the gate.

There was a light in one of the windows, which was half-covered by a muslin blind. After hesitating for a moment, he stole in across the garden, and kneeling on the ground, so that only the upper part of his face projected above the sill, he looked in.

Thus placed, he could see the interior of a humble apartment, in which several people, including his new acquaintance, were seated, about to partake of a frugal supper.

James Sutherland, the blind weaver, sat in his working clothes at the head of the table, on his right hand was his son, opposite him Mrs. Sutherland, and on *her* right, little Jessie.

As Caussidière watched, the blind man rose reverently, and all heads were bent; his lips moved, and although no word was audible to the eavesdropper, he was evidently saying grace.

Caussidière had seen enough. He rose stealthily and crept back to the road.

Then he walked carelessly on, laughing aloud.

'A common weaver's son! almost a beggar!' he muttered to himself in his own tongue. 'What a fool you were, Caussidière, to take the alarm.'

Well satisfied, apparently, with the entire state of things, the Frenchman strolled on to seek his night's rest at the village inn.

CHAPTER XI.

A SCOTTISH SUNDAY.

THE next day was Sunday—the solemn; not to say sanctionious, Sabbath day of that people which, above all others, reverences the great work of creation.

Marjorie rose early, and wandering into the garden, found that it was still sunny weather. At eight o'clock the minister and she breakfasted together, waited upon by Mysie Simpson. Solomon Mucklebackit, dressed in a suit of black broadcloth dismal enough for a mute, with a shirt-front of snowy whiteness, and a chimney-pot hat on his bald head, was already over at the church, seeing that everything was in order.

After breakfast, Marjorie strolled to the front gate, and stood looking up and down the road, and enjoying the sunshine. Presently Solomon came over from the churchyard and accosted her.

'What dae ye here, Marjorie? Looking oot again for yon birkie frae France?'

Marjorie flushed angrily.

'For shame, Solomon! How dare you speak to me like that? I'll tell Mr. Lorraine.'

'As ye please,' replied Solomon. 'If I dee for it, I'll speak my mind.'

At that very moment, as if to confirm the sexton in his suspicion, the figure of Caussidière appeared, coming round a bend of the road.

'Talk o' the deil!' muttered Solomon, adding quickly, with a look of pious self-reproach, 'Lord forgie me for naming *him* on the Sabbath day!'

And with a scowl up the road Solomon disappeared into the manse.

Marjorie did not know whether to stand her ground or retire.

Before she could decide what to do, Caussidière came up and smilingly saluted her.

‘Good morning, mademoiselle.’

‘Good morning,’ answered Marjorie, rather coldly.

‘You are out early,’ continued the young man. ‘For myself, I could not sleep. The fresh country air acted on my brain like champagne, and kept me wide awake. I was going for a morning stroll. Will you come with me?’

Marjorie shook her head.

‘I have a great deal to do before the church begins. I—I cannot come.’

‘I am sorry for that. But I shall see you by-and-by.’

I think so,’ she stammered in reply. ‘Maybe! I can’t tell.’

Caussidière looked at her keenly, and then uttered an exclamation.

‘You are not angry with me, my child?’

‘Angry, monsieur? Why do you ask that?’

‘Because—ah, perhaps it is my foolishness, but I thought you seemed a little angry? But it is not so? No? Then I am happy again. Tell me, at what hour does the service of your church begin?’

‘At eleven. You are coming, then?’

‘Yes, since you are to be there.’

‘I think there will be a good congregation,’ said Marjorie, not noticing the words nor the ardent look which accompanied them. Mr. Lorraine is a beautiful preacher, I am sure you will like him.’

‘Perhaps—yet I am afraid.’

‘Afraid?’

‘That if you are near I shall not hear much of the service.’

‘Pray do not talk like that, monsieur; I am sure you do not mean it, and—and it is the Sabbath!’

Caussidière smiled; then forcing his face to a grave expression, he said:

‘Forgive me! I will try to be good; but ah! you are more

interesting to me than all the sermons in the world. Well, *au plaisir* ! You know what that means, my dear scholar ? It means this—to the pleasure of seeing you again. But I see you are impatient, and I will not trouble you any longer now.’

So he left her, having quite succeeded in disturbing the serenity of her seventh-day meditations. She turned back into the manse, struggling mentally, like a bird entangled in a net. The man fascinated and yet repelled her ; his admiration flattered and pleased, yet irritated her. In her eyes he seemed handsomer and cleverer than ever, and where is the young maid over whom a handsome face, combined with the prestige of intellect does not exercise a certain spell ? She could understand Sutherland’s love for her—it seemed natural enough, and no great compliment—but that Monsieur Caussidière, a being altogether superior to her usual experience, and so much wiser and cleverer than herself, should be seriously captivated, awoke a strange sensation of delight and pride. His manners, too, were so engaging—so gay and unaffected, and yet so full of profound respect. Alas for Marjorie ! She had already forgotten Miss Hetherington’s warning, and was beginning to yield to a growing fascination.

Her prediction turned out to be quite correct ; there was an unusually large gathering that day in the little church. Whole families came in, in vehicles or on foot, from the neighbouring farms ; the farmers in decent broadcloth, the farmer’s wives resplendent in new summer bonnets and other finery ; and there were groups of labouring men and girls, all as brightly attired as their condition would allow. Then there was the doctor and his young wife, whom he had just brought from Fife ; and other worthies of the parish, including Jock Steven of the inn, in a splendid embroidered waistcoat and the Gladstonian collar, known in Scotland as ‘stick-ups.’ James Sutherland, the blind weaver, occupied a seat, with his wife, son, and daughter by his side. Not far from them sat Caussidière, with his eyes turned towards Marjorie, whose place was just under the pulpit, close to

the double row of forms occupied by the little lads and lasses of the village school.

Just as the bells ceased to ring, and Mr. Lorraine was issuing from the vestry, there was a stir in the congregation, and all eyes were turned to see Miss Hetherington, who appeared at the door and came slowly towards the family pew. The old manservant followed behind her, carrying her Bible and hymn-book. She moved to her place and gave one flash of her dark eyes round the congregation, while the servant placed the books before her, and withdrew to another part of the church.

The service began. It is no part of my duty to describe it, or the sermon, though Mr. Lorraine was really, as Marjorie had asserted, a good preacher, and Solomon Mucklebackit, seated just under his master, spectacles on nose, had a way of delivering out the first words of the hymn, and of starting the air with his tuning fork, which was sufficiently awe-inspiring. Once, as Solomon struck the fork on the desk and applied it to his ear, the expression of his face was so comical that Caussidière could not repress a smile; and at that moment, unfortunately, he was detected by the precentor, who scowled at him with a countenance of unutterable wrath.

It was a warm and sunny day, as I have said—one of those days in early spring when the lambs leap, and waters are loud, and boughs rustle, and the very grass seems stirring and alive. A beam of golden light coming through one of the church windows fell full on Marjorie Annan, and rested round her with a tremor of moted rays; and following the beam outward the eyes saw the boughs of a silver birch tree waving close to the pane, and beyond again, a peep of the blue sky.

A drowsy stillness, broken only by the measured tones of the preacher's voice, filled the sacred building.

The farmers and labouring people sat and listened—half hearing and half dozing—enjoying, after their six days of hard work, a delicious sense of rest. Girls crept closer to their lovers, drowsily happy. In the brightest place in the church, with her

aureole round her, sat Marjorie Annan ; and three pairs of eyes at least were constantly fixed upon her. The first pair belonged to young Sutherland, the second to the French visitor, the third to the eccentric mistress of Hetherington Castle.

Of these three individuals Caussidière was the most ill at ease. The sermon bored him, and he yawned again and again.

‘This tiresome Scotland!’ he thought to himself, as he sleepily regarded Marjorie, and watched the increeping sunshine. ‘To think of sitting in a dreary church on such a day, instead of walking about in the sun and rejoicing in the new birth of nature! In Paris just now the streets are gay, there is life and music and pretty faces everywhere. But here—*corbleu*! If it were not for *la belle Marjorie* I should run away.’

Instead of running away, Caussidière went to sleep.

He was awakened by a loud noise, and looking round him he saw the congregation moving towards the door, and Solomon Mucklebackit, from the precentor’s desk, glaring down at him in renewed indignation. He rose languidly, and joined the stream of people issuing from the church.

Out in the churchyard the sun was shining golden on the graves. At the gate several vehicles were waiting, including the brougham from Hetherington Castle.

As Caussidière moved down the path he saw before him a small group of persons conversing—the blind weaver and his wife, John Sutherland, Marjorie, and the lady of the Castle. He passed by them with lifted hat, and moved on to the gate, where he waited.

‘Who’s yon?’ asked Miss Hetherington, following him with her dark eyes.

‘That is Monsieur Caussidière,’ answered Marjorie, ‘my French teacher.’

‘Humph!’ said the lady. ‘Come awa’ and introduce me!’

She walked slowly down the path, while Marjorie followed in astonishment, and coming right up to the Frenchman, she looked him deliberately from head to foot.

Not at all disconcerted, he took off his hat again, and bowed politely.

'Monsieur Caussidière,' said Marjorie, 'this is Miss Hetherington of the Castle.

Caussidière bowed again, with great respect.

'I am charmed to make madame's acquaintance.'

To his astonishment, Miss Hetherington addressed him in his own tongue, which she spoke fluently, though with an unmistakable Scottish inflection.

'You speak English well, monsieur,' she said. 'Have you been long absent from your native land?'

'Ever since the crime of December,' he returned, also in French. 'But madame is almost a Frenchwoman—she speaks the language to admiration. Ah, it is a pleasure to me, an exile, to hear the beloved tongue of France so perfectly spoken! You know France? You have lived there, madame?'

'I know it, and know little good of it,' cried the lady sharply. 'Are you like the rest of your countrymen, light and treacherous, believing in nothing that is good, spending their lives in vanity and sensual pleasure?'

Caussidière started in surprise, he was not accustomed to such plain-speaking.

'Madame is severe,' he replied with a sarcastic smile. 'She does not approve of the morals of my nation? No? Yet *parbleu!* they compare not unfavourably with those of *pious* Scotland!'

This rebuff rather disconcerted the plain-spoken lady, who was driven back upon her citadel of idiomatic Scotch.

'Think ye sae!' she said with her harsh laugh. 'And what ken *you* o' pious Scotland, as ye call it? Hae you lived sae lang amongst us without finding man or woman to set your foreign lordship a good example?'

'Pardon me,' said Caussidière, in the same dry tone as before. 'I am foolish enough to place reliance, not upon my own observation, but upon—what you call—statistics!'

'Stateestics, quotha!' echoed Miss Hetherington. 'Weel, you're glib and clever enough, I dinna doot, to twist a bunch o' lily flowers into the shape o' a soo's lug—if ye ken what *that* is? You may sneer at our Scotch morals as ye please, my man, but my certie! we hae taught your lordships many a sair lesson, besides the one ye learned sae weel at Waterloo?'

And she turned up the path impatiently, while the Frenchman shrugged his shoulders and looked loftily indignant. Marjorie, who had watched the preceding passage of arms with no little anxiety, not quite following the conversation so long as it took place in French, glanced imploringly at Caussidière.

'Don't mind Miss Hetherington,' she said when that lady was out of hearing. 'What Mr. Lorraine says of her is true, her bark's waur than her bite; and she means no offence.'

'Who is she, my child? Oh, I remember, the eccentric old lady whom you visited yesterday.'

Marjorie nodded; and at that moment Mr. Lorraine came down the path, followed by Solomon, and met Miss Hetherington, who began talking to him vehemently.

'She is not very polite,' muttered Caussidière; 'and see, she is already abusing me to your guardian.'

He held out his hand.

'Good-bye! I shall see you, perhaps, later in the day.'

'Perhaps. Oh, monsieur, you are not offended?'

'Not at all,' replied Caussidière, though the look with which he regarded his late antagonist rather belied his words. 'I forgive her for your sake, my child!'

He looked so sad and injured that Marjorie quite pitied him, and felt angry with Miss Hetherington for having been so rude.

'What must he think of us?' she thought to herself as he walked away with a sigh. 'He, who is so polite to everybody, so unwilling to cause anyone a moment's pain.'

Without waiting any longer she walked over to the manse. In a few minutes Mr. Lorraine joined her, and informed her that Miss Hetherington, in a high temper, had driven away home.

Questioned as to what had taken place, Marjorie warmly defended Caussidière, and soon convinced her guardian that the rudeness had been all on the other side.

'Well, well,' said the minister, 'we must bear with her; in spite of her strange ways and violent temper she has a kind heart, and you, my bairn, have no sincerer friend.'

Here Solomon Mucklebackit, who had been listening to the conversation, delivered his professional fiat.

'Mistress Hetherington's right,' he said. 'She doesna like him, and she's a wise woman!'

'Solomon, my man,' said the minister, with some severity. 'we were not asking your opinion.'

'But ye'll get it, meenister. Are ye blin' that ye canna see what brings the birkie here? Na, na, Marjorie, you needna froom. He's cothing after yoursel', and I wish he were a hundred miles awa'.'

'It's not *true*!' cried Marjorie, her eyes filling with indignant tears. 'Oh, Mr. Lorraine!'

'Solomon, leave the room! You have no right to use such language!' exclaimed the minister indignantly.

'I hae this right,' returned Solomon, moving to the door, 'that the bairn's my foster as weel as yours, meenister. I'm speaking for Marjorie's *gude*! You can order me frae the room if you please—ay, and turn me frae the hoose—but I'll say this in your teeth—I dinna like him, and I dinna trust him; and 'twas an ill win' that blew him doon here.'

He passed out of the room; but the next moment thrust in his head, saying:

'And he went soond asleep in the middle o' your ain sermon, the awtheist! I had a mind to fling the muckle hymn-book at his heid!'

* * * * *

Marjorie did not go to church again that day. She had a headache, and kept her room. It was altogether a gloomy after-

noon. Mr. Lorraine, secretly troubled in his mind, had difficulty in concentrating his thoughts on his religious duties, and Solomon preserved an invincible taciturnity. So the day passed away, and evening came.

There was no evening service, for Mr. Lorraine was too infirm to conduct three services in one day. After a dismal tea, to which Marjorie came down, the minister sat reading a volume of sermons, and presently Marjorie left the room, put on her hat, and strolled into the garden.

It was a beautiful evening, and the moon was rising over the far-off hills. With her head still aching wearily, the girl wandered out upon the road and into the churchyard. She crept close to the western wall, and looked for a long time at one of the tombstones. Then sighing deeply, she came out and strolled up the village.

The bright weather and the fresh air enticed her on and on till she came to the rural bridge above Annan Water.

All was still and peaceful; not a sound, not a breath disturbed the Sabbath silence. She leaned over the stone parapet and looked sadly down.

Her thoughts were wandering far away—flowing, flowing with the murmuring stream. She had fallen into a waking dream when she heard a footstep behind her. She started and uttered a low cry as she saw a dark figure approaching in the moonlight.

CHAPTER XII.

THE GREEN-EYED MONSTER.

THE figure advanced rapidly, and in a moment Marjorie recognised her tutor.

‘Monsieur Caussidière!’ she cried.

‘Yes,’ returned the Frenchman quietly, ‘it is I.’

He took her hand in his, and found it cold and trembling,

'I have frightened you,' he said.

'Yes, monsieur; I was startled because I did not hear you coming, and I seemed to be far away.'

'You were dreaming, Marjorie?'

'Yes, monsieur, I was dreaming.'

She did not notice that he called her by her Christian name; had she done so, she would have taken little heed. It seemed but natural that he should do so; she was so small and young, he so much beyond her both in years and education, and, indeed, was she not known to everyone as plain Marjorie Annan.

She seemed strangely sad and preoccupied to-night. After the Frenchman had joined her, she relapsed into her former dream; she folded her arms upon the bridge again, and fixed her sad eyes upon the flowing river. Causidière, partaking of her mood, looked downward too.

'You love the water, Marjorie?'

'Yes, it is my kith and kin.'

'You have been here for hours have you not? I sought you at the manse in vain!'

'I was not here, monsieur. I was in the kirkyard among the graves.'

'Among the graves?' returned the Frenchman, looking anxiously at her. 'A strange place for *you* to wander in, my child! It is only when we have seen trouble and lost friends that we seek such places. For me it would be fitting, perhaps, but for you it is different. You are so young and should be so happy.'

'Ah, yes,' sighed Marjorie, 'I am happy enough.'

'And yet you sadden the days that should be brightest by wandering near the dead. Why did you go to the churchyard, little one?'

'Why, monsieur? To see my mother's grave.'

'Your mother's grave. I thought you did not know your mother!'

'They *say* she was my mother,' returned Marjorie quickly.

'She was found drowned in Annan Water—was it not dreadful, monsieur?—and she was buried yonder in the kirkyard when I was a little child.'

'And you think she was your mother?'

'They say so, monsieur, but I do not think it is true.'

'No?'

'I have gone to her grave and stayed by it, and tried to think they are right, but I cannot—I aye come away as I did to-night and look at Annan Water, and feel it more my kin.'

'Marjorie!'

'Yes, monsieur!'

'I fancy you are right, child; perhaps your mother lives.'

'Ah; you think that?'

'More; she is perhaps watching over you though she cannot speak. She may reveal herself some day.'

'You believe so, monsieur,' repeated Marjorie, her face brightening with joy.

'It is very probable, my child. You are not of the *canaille*, Marjorie. When I first saw you I knew that; then I heard your story, and it interested me. I thought, "We are strangely alike—we are like two of a country cast adrift in a foreign land, but our destinies seem to be one. She is exiled from her kindred; I am exiled from my home. She has a kindly heart and will understand me; we must be friends." We will be friends, Marjorie, will we not?'

He held out his hand and the girl took it.

'You are very good, monsieur,' she answered simply.

'Then you must treat me as a friend indeed, little one,' he answered. 'I will take no money for your lessons; it is a pleasure for me to teach you, and—and Mr. Lorraine is not rich.'

'Mr. Lorraine?' said Marjorie, opening her blue eyes; 'it is not Mr. Lorraine who pays for my schooling but Miss Hetherington.'

'Is that so?'

'Yes, that is so. Mr. Lorraine did not wish to have taught me beyond my station; but Miss Hetherington said I must learn.' Caussidière seemed to reflect profoundly.

'Miss Hetherington is a philanthropic lady, then?'

'Do you think so, monsieur?'

'Do not *you* think so, Marjorie, since she is universally kind and generous.'

'Ah,' returned Marjorie, 'I do not think she is always generous, monsieur; but she is very kind to *me*. Why, she has almost kept me ever since I was a child.'

To this the Frenchman did not reply. He leaned forward carelessly, as if dreamily watching the water, but in reality he was stealthily watching Marjorie's face. A new light had come into Marjorie's eyes, and her brow was knit. Presently he spoke again, returning to the subject, which seemed to possess a strange interest for him. He reminded Marjorie of the encounter between himself and Miss Hetherington that afternoon, and by a little quiet questioning he got her to talk unrestrainedly of the strange relations between Miss Hetherington and herself. Thus he learned that the lady, not content with helping Marjorie, had given fifty pounds for a picture of her, 'though,' Marjorie hurriedly explained, 'it was more to patronize Mr. Sutherland than because she wanted the picture.'

'Which proves that she is a philanthropist after all,' said the Frenchman quietly. '*Mon Dieu*, I am sorry I have offended the lady! I adore all people who do good deeds.'

'You have offended her, monsieur?'

'I fear so, my child. She was violent against my country, which I could not hear abused. I defended the absent, *voilà tout*!'

Again there was silence between them; the Frenchman seemed somewhat disturbed; he lit a cigar and watched Marjorie through the clouds of smoke. Presently the clock in the church tower struck the hour, and Marjorie started.

'I must be walking home,' she said.

She began to move across the bridge, the Frenchman keeping beside her; he took her hand and placed it on his arm, but Marjorie quickly drew it away again.

'You are not angry with me?' he asked in alarm.

'No, indeed, monsieur, I am not angry, but——,' she paused, confused.

'Well?' said he.

'It would not look right,' said Marjorie desperately; 'we are so different—you and I.'

'Ah, I understand,' he replied, sadly; 'a poor exiled Frenchman is no fit companion for you—you will give him a word in private and the poor devil clutches at it as a starving dog would clutch at a bone; in public he is no longer your friend.'

'Indeed, monsieur, you misunderstand,' said Marjorie quickly. 'I did not mean that; I—I——'

'Pardon, my child! I am a brute to distress you; but I am not what I was, Marjorie; much sorrow and adverse fortune have made me sad and almost bitter; yes, alas! made me doubt my best friends; but I will doubt you no more, for you are my one comfort in this dreary land.'

They had been walking steadily onward, and now they reached the door of the inn. Marjorie paused and held forth her hand.

'Good-night, monsieur,' she said.

'Good-night!—shall I not walk with you to the manse, little one?'

Marjorie shook her head.

'I would rather walk there alone.'

The Frenchman shrugged his shoulders.

'*Eh bien*, since you wish it I will think you are right. Good-night, my little friend, and *au revoir*.'

He took the hand which she had extended towards him, raised it to his lips, then patted it as if he had been patting the

fingers of a child ; it was this air of fatherly friendliness which made her trust him, and which won for him all the sympathy of her affectionate heart. It was so terrible to be alone, thought Marjorie ; to be exiled from his country, his home, his friends. She pitied everyone in trouble, and she pitied and sympathized with Caussidière above all, never once dreaming that pity is a dangerous thing, and sometimes turns to love.

When Caussidière imprinted a kiss upon her hand she neither blushed nor drew it away, but she said softly, 'Good night, monsieur, God bless you !' at which the Frenchman kissed her hand again, and then, turning quickly, entered the inn.

Marjorie turned too, feeling her kind little heart overflowing, and walked away down the moonlit road. She had not gone many steps when she was abruptly joined by a man. She did not start nor seem surprised ; indeed, while she was parting with the Frenchman she had seen John Sutherland watching her from the opposite side of the road.

'Good evening, Johnnie,' said Marjorie quietly. 'Why did you not come forward and speak to Monsieur Caussidière ?'

The young man started, but made no answer.

'Johnnie, what is wrong ?' she asked.

He paused and looked at her.

'Marjorie,' he said, 'tell me what you were doing with that man ?'

It was no time for his reproaches ; her whole soul rose in revolt.

'With that man ?' she repeated angrily. 'Do you mean with Monsieur Caussidière ?'

'Yes, with that villainous Frenchman,' he returned, driven recklessly onward by his anger. 'Why are you always in his company, Marjorie Annan ?'

Marjorie drew herself proudly up. Had the Frenchman seen her then he would have had little doubt as to the stock whence she came.

'I am in his company because I am his friend,' she answered proudly. 'Yes, his friend; and as his friend I will not hear him insulted. Good night.'

She walked quickly away, but in a moment he was again beside her.

'Marjorie, will you not listen to me?'

'No, I will not,' returned the girl angrily. 'Whatever you have to say against Monsieur Caussidière you shall not say to me. He was right; you are all against him, and you are the worst of all. Do you think it just or kind to abuse a man simply because he is a stranger and unfortunate? What has Monsieur Caussidière ever done to *you* that you should dislike him so much?'

The young man stared at her flushed cheeks and angry eyes; then he exclaimed:

'Marjorie, answer me! Tell me it's not possible that you care for yon man.'

She flushed crimson and turned away.

'I care for anyone,' she answered evasively, 'who is alone, and who wants a friend. Monsieur Caussidière has been very kind to me, and—and I am sorry for him.'

'You are more than that, Marjorie; but take care, for I know he is a scoundrel.'

'How dare you say so?' returned Marjorie. 'You are a coward, Johnnie Sutherland. If he were here you would not speak like that.'

'I would say the same to him as to you. If he were not a scoundrel he would not entice you from your home.'

This was too much for Marjorie. She uttered an indignant exclamation, and, without deigning to reply, hastened rapidly away. This time he did not hasten after her, and almost before he could recover from his surprise she had entered the manse door.

She found them preparing for evening prayers.

Both Mr. Lorraine and Solomon were getting uneasy at her

absence. Solomon, the moment the load of anxiety was lifted from his heart, began to rate her soundly, and asked her where she had been.

'To the kirkyard first,' she answered, 'then to Annan Bridge.'

'Alane?' asked Solomon, who guarded her like a very watch dog.

'No,' answered Marjorie, 'not alone.'

'And wha might have been your companion?'

'I had two,' she replied, 'Johnnie Sutherland and Monsieur Caussidière.'

'Monsieur Caussidière?' repeated Solomon contemptuously, 'the sleekit French scoondrel wha laughed at the meenister's prayers, and sleepit owre the meenister's sermon? Braw company for a Sabbath night I'm thinkin', and for Marjorie Annan. Ye'll pray for Monsieur Caussidière, mayhap, and muckle gude your prayers will do *him*.'

In one thing Solomon was right, Marjorie *did* pray for Monsieur Caussidière; for since she found that every voice was raised against him, her little heart warmed to him the more. So she prayed for him; for the man whom she believed to be fully deserving of her friendship—perhaps of her love.

CHAPTER XIII.

CAUSSIDIÈRE FINDS A CLUE.

WHEN the Frenchman sat at breakfast the next morning he was thinking a good deal of Marjorie Annan, and strange to say, the next individual mingled up intimately in his reflections was Miss Hetherington of the Castle.

'There is a mystery!' he said to himself, as he sipped his chocolate and ate his bread and butter; 'and if they were to search all England, and perhaps *la belle France*, they would not

find a man better able to unravel a mystery than myself. The old witch was a fool to abuse me—she may have cause to regret it before our acquaintance shall cease. Let me see! Why did she become violent? Ah, I have it! because I said the morals of France would compare with those of bonnie Scotland. It was a random shot, but it told, it seems.'

He rose, walked to the window, and looked out. He could see in the distance the dim outline of the Castle woods.

'A charming place,' he continued; 'old and crusty, like its mistress. If I were an artist now! But, alas! my education in that respect has been neglected, which I regret now for the first time in my life. *Parbleu*, I must think, for the fault must be remedied. Since I am not an artist, and cannot sketch the Castle, I must be interested as an amateur in something which the Castle contains.

He left the window, returned to the table, and proceeded leisurely to finish his breakfast.

'Marjorie!' he said. 'Marjorie Annan! *Ma foi*, but it is a pretty name, and she is a pretty creature who bears it; and she is of gentle birth too—every look and gesture tells me that! How things are changing! I had thought her a mere plaything; I had thought her fit to make the dull hours pass pleasantly for me till such time as I could return to my native land; but it seems she may be destined for something better! Well, we shall see.'

There remained but four days before the classes reopened, and the Frenchman resolved that those days should not be spent idly. To a casual observer it would seem that he did nothing, for the great part of his time seemed to be spent in wandering about the meadows and lanes lazily, cigar in mouth, enjoying the spring sunshine. Sometimes during those strolls he met Marjorie and had some pleasant talk with her; sometimes he called at the manse to chat with Mr. Lorraine, receiving a scowl from Solomon as he came or went. Strange to say, at neither of these interviews either with Marjorie or

her foster-father, did he ever again mention Miss Hetherington's name.

But, on the other hand, Miss Hetherington was becoming strangely interested in *him*.

After that scene with Marjorie on Sunday night, Sutherland was in a state of despair; for two days he walked about in misery; on the third day his resolution was fixed, and he determined to act. He went up to the Castle and sought an interview with Miss Hetherington.

'Weel, Johnnie Sutherland,' began the lady, regarding him grimly, 'what's wrong now?'

Five minutes before the young man had been resolute, but once he found himself under the lady's baleful eye he grew extremely ill at ease.

'Miss Hetherington,' he began, blushing, and looking strangely uncomfortable, 'I—I wished to speak to you.'

'Of course, of course,' replied the lady impatiently, 'else why did ye come to Annandale. What's your news?'

'I think—in fact, I am sure—you are interested in Marjorie Annan.'

'Call ye *that* news? Disna a' the glen ken I'm interested in the lassie because she's good and bonnie? What more?'

'You would be sorry if she came to harm?'

In a moment the lady's face changed.

'Deil take the lad!' she exclaimed; 'what's he driving at? Where's the harm that's threatening Marjorie Annan?'

'The Frenchman,' said Sutherland. 'She is being wooed away from her home by the Frenchman.'

'What do you mean?' asked the lady sharply. 'What fool's tale is this that ye bring to me, Johnnie Sutherland?'

Emboldened at last, Sutherland spoke out. He told of the scene which he had had with Marjorie, of her anger against himself, and of her constant meetings with the stranger. Miss Hetherington listened with averted head, and laughed grimly when he had done.

'I see how it is,' she said; 'tis the old tale—twa lads and a lassie. But I dinna like the Frenchman, Johnnie, no more than yoursel'. I'll speak wi' Mr. Lorraine maybe; 'tis his work to keep the bairnie right, though he does his work ill, I'm thinking. You're a good lad, Johnnie, and as to Marjorie, she's a short-sighted eediot not to see wha's her friend.'

She spoke lightly and cheerfully, but the moment Sutherland disappeared both her face and manner changed.

'The lad was right,' she said. 'Love has made him keen-sighted, and he has told me the truth. Marjorie is in danger. Now is the time when she needs the care o' kind folk to keep her frae the one false step that ruins all. Marjorie Annan, what shall I do for you, my bairn?'

She stood for a time meditating; then she looked at her watch and found it was still early in the day. She summoned her old servant, ordered the carriage; and a quarter of an hour later was driving away towards the town of Dumfries.

On the way, a few hundred yards from the manse door, she saw the Frenchman, nonchalantly strolling onward in the direction of the manse. Monsieur Caussidière swept off his hat and bowed almost to the ground, but the lady stared sternly at him and made no sign.

A strange smile lit the Frenchman's face as the clumsy old carriage swept on.

'Madame,' he muttered, 'you do not know what you do when you declare open war with Caussidière.'

He turned and strolled on in another direction—across the field and through the lanes towards Annandale Castle. After the first half mile his face brightened, his step quickened, and he walked right up to the door like a man who has a fixed purpose in view.

Caussidière walked boldly forward and pulled the bell. The first summons produced no effect at all; on its being repeated, however, the old serving-man shuffled to the door, and seeing a stranger, asked in somewhat sharp tones what he sought.

The Frenchman's face wore its most winning smile as he replied suavely :

'I seek Madame—or rather I should say Mademoiselle——'

The old man's face was black as thunder. Foreigners were by no means popular in Annandale.

'If you are thinking to see Miss Hetherington, ye'll no be gratified. She's awa' till Dumfries and beyond; and she'll no be hame till nicht.'

The Frenchman looked disappointed.

'I am sorry,' he said. 'I should have liked to see the lady. When do you think she will be back, my friend ?'

'The nicht. What dae ye want wi' her ?'

'Very little after all, you will say. I merely wished to be allowed to inspect the northern tower of the Castle.'

'You wish to gang wannerin' ower the hoose ? It canna be dune.'

'You are right, my friend,' returned the Frenchman blandly. 'Of courae it cannot be done since the mistress is away.'

'If the mistress, as ye are pleased to ca' her, was hen the hoose it would be a' ane. It couldna be done. A bonnie thing, on my life, to turn Annandale intill a show hoose for a' the carles i' the toon !'

The Frenchman put his finger and thumb into his waistcoat pocket, and drew forth something, which he placed in the old man's hand.

'I am sorry to have troubled you, my friend,' he said, 'but since you say the interior of the Castle is not on view, perhaps I may be permitted to walk for ten minutes in the garden ?'

The old man looked down ; there in his withered palm lay a golden piece of money. He started and looked again. At first he felt impelled to give it back ; then his lean fingers closed over the prize, and with a grunt he put it in his pocket.

'May I be permitted,' said Caussidière, 'to walk in the grounds ?'

'Of coorse, of coorse,' returned the old fellow testily, 'what for no? The grounds are open till ane as well as till anither.'

'Thanks, my good friend.'

The Frenchman lifted his hat in his most courteous manner, and was about to move away when the voice of the old servant arrested him.

'Will you come back when Miss Hetherington's hame? I dinna ken, but maybe she'd let ye ben the hoose.'

'No, I cannot return.'

'And wherefore no?'

'Because on the morrow I return to my work in town. This was an idle day, and I had hoped to spend it pleasantly. However, since mademoiselle will not trust you——'

'And wha dare say *that*?' broke in the old man angrily, 'wha dare say that Sandie Sloane canna be trusted by the Mistress o' Annandale?'

'Pardon me, good friend,' interrupted the Frenchman, more blandly than before, 'I was about to say, but you interrupted me, that mademoiselle would not trust you to show the Castle.'

'And wha might it be that set *that* tale about? No show the hoose!—have I no shown the hoose to folk before the day? Ay, and if I had a mind I could show it till yersel', tho' you think I canna.'

The old fellow evidently wanted to be taken at his word, and the Frenchman immediately gratified him.

'Thanks, good friend,' he said, as he stepped into the hall.

The plunge once taken, the deed was done. The Frenchman had paid liberally for civility, and he was about to get his money's worth. His polite manners, coupled with his liberality, soon cleared away the old man's prejudice against foreigners.

'Maybe,' said he, remembering the gold which lay in his pocket, 'noo you're here, you'd like to see a' the hoose. The Lord kens there isna muckle to see; the auld place is fading awa' like the line o' the Hetheringtons.'

'I have heard,' returned the Frenchman, 'that Miss Hetherington was the last of the family.'

'And you hae heard richt. 'Twill be an end to a' the Hetheringtons when she gangs her gait.'

'It is strange, is it not, that she never married ?'

Caussidière as he spoke looked curiously at his companion, but the old man's face did not change.

'Aye,' he returned, 'there was ance a time when fôlk thought she *would* mairry. She gangit awa' to London toon; after she came hame there were letters through the post for her ilka day. Ane day Mr. Hugh took the letters frae the postman wi' his ain hand, and that nicht we heard moans and cries at mirk. In the morning the mistress was sent awa', driven forth by Mr. Hugh, we thought; and she was awa' for montha.'

'And after she returned ?'

'Aye, but no till she had promised to be obedient till her brither. Then she cam' to Annandale, but she was a changed woman. She bore Mr. Hugh's mark upon her face then as she bears it noo.'

'And that is long ago ?'

'Aye, seventeen years.'

'Seventeen years !' thought the Frenchman. 'That is the very age of Marjorie Annan !'

It was a strange coincidence. Caussidière kept it in his mind as he followed the footsteps of his guide.

They passed from room to room, finding each one gloomier than its predecessor. The old man pointed out the pictures and various relics which he thought might be interesting, and Caussidière glanced about him with eyes like a hawk. As they passed onward his face became less radiant; a frown of weariness and disappointment began to cloud his brow. At length the whole of the Castle had been examined, and the two men began to descend the quaint oaken stairs. Caussidière, lingering as if in no haste to be gone, still talked pleasantly, and glanced impatiently about him.

Presently they passed the half-open door of a kind of boudoir. Caussidière, who had looked keenly in, paused suddenly.

'Surely,' he said, 'I know that face.'

The old man went forward, and pushed open the door, and the Frenchman, following closely upon him, entered the room, and stood thoughtfully regarding the object which had arrested his attention. It was a picture, a good-sized painting, which hung above the mantelpiece.

'Tis Marjorie Annan,' explained the old man, 'foster-daughter to the minister. 'Twas painted by Johnnie Sutherland. The mistress bought it because she likes the lassie, and because it has a favour o' hersel.'

The Frenchman stared.

'Like Miss Hetherington?' said he.

'Aye, like hersel,' returned the old man. 'You'd no be denying it if you saw the picture in that press. 'Tis Miss Hetherington at seventeen or eighteen years of age.'

'I should like to see the picture.'

'Aweel, aweel, you should see it; but the press is locked, and Mysie has the key.'

'You could not get it, I suppose?'

'Ay, I could get it,' returned Sandie, still under the influence of the Frenchman's gold. 'Bide awhile and you shall see.'

He shuffled off, leaving the Frenchman alone.

The moment he was gone, Caussidière's face and manner underwent a complete change. He sprang upon the room, as it were, with cat-like fury, turned over papers, opened drawers, ransacking everything completely. At last he came upon a drawer which would not open; it was in a writing cabinet, the counterpart of one he had at home; he pressed a hidden spring; in a moment the drawer flew open, and Caussidière was rapidly going over the papers which it contained.

Suddenly he started, drew forth a paper, opened and read it. A gleam of light passed over his face. He folded the paper, thrust it into the inner pocket of his coat, and closed the drawer.

When the old man returned with his key, he found Caussidière with his hands behind him, quietly regarding the picture of Marjorie Annan.

CHAPTER XIV.

IS A LITTLE MYSTERIOUS.

WHILE the persevering Caussidière was inspecting the interior of Annandale Castle, Miss Hetherington was busily making inquiries about him at Dumfries.

She had commenced in the hope of hearing something which she might use against him; to her amazement, and, it must be admitted, rather to her annoyance, public opinion was decidedly in his favour. Caussidière was known to one and all as an inoffensive man enough, who always conducted himself properly, and had a smile and a kind word for everyone.

The lady was honestly disappointed at the result of her researches; and when at length her carriage stopped before the door of the school which Caussidière attended, she was by no means in an amiable frame of mind. She stalked into the house and sat bolt upright in the drawing-room; and when the mistress appeared she looked severely at her, and blurted out at once the thought that was in her mind.

'Aweel,' she said, 'I dare swear you're like the rest o' the silly townsfolk; you'll be tellin' me *you* think weel o' this French carle.'

The lady looked puzzled.

'I don't quite understand,' she said.

'Tell me, then, in plain English, what you think o' this Monsieur Caussidière, as he calls himself.'

'Of Monsieur Caussidière? I think very well indeed of him, Miss Hetherington.'

'And if you had to send him packin' nae doubt you'd be sorry.'

'I should be very sorry.'

‘And why?’

‘Because I consider him a good teacher; besides, he is pleasant, and has always conducted himself well. I fear you do not like him, Miss Hetherington.’

‘And ye fear right. I dinna like him, and I dinna trust him. Will ye bid him quit the school?’

The lady looked troubled.

‘Give up the school?’ she said. ‘I am afraid, madam, I could not do that.’

‘And why no?’

‘It would hardly be just to the gentleman. Consider, Miss Hetherington, he has always behaved well, and done his work admirably. I could not bring forward a single thing against him.’

‘Aweel, weel, maybe you’re right; but with or without your help I’ll keep him awa’ frae Marjorie Annan.’

And without waiting for further conversation she abruptly took her leave.

She did not call at the minister’s house that night, but drove straight up to the Castle. Her mind was in a strange state of perturbation; she did not know which way to act. She could not explain even to herself the reason of her curious detestation of the Frenchman. It was an omen, and she believed in omens. Though she had not been able to make one person speak against him, her heart told her that evil would surely come, unless he could be got fairly out of the way. As that seemed impossible, at any rate for the time being, the next and only thing to do was to remove Marjorie from his close vicinity.

Miss Hetherington spent that night in dreaming and planning; the next day she ordered out her carriage and drove down to the manse.

She was lucky enough to find both Mr. Lorraine and Marjorie. The latter, who was looking flushed and somewhat pleased, informed her visitor that she had been packing up her things to return to school on the following day,

'And ye'll be glad to go?' said Miss Hetherington, looking at the girl's bright eyes and smiling lips.

'Yes,' said Marjorie candidly. 'I shall be glad.'

The lady was silent for a few moments, then she turned to Mr. Lorraine :

'You were ne'er muckle in favour of Marjorie's French lessons,' she said abruptly.

The clergyman started but made no reply, so she continued sharply :

'You're no the man to deny what you ken to be true, Mr. Lorraine.'

'Dear me, no ; I am not denying it, Miss Hetherington,' said the clergyman mildly. 'Now you mention it, I remember I did say at the time I thought French was an accomplishment which Marjorie would never be likely to need ; but you thought otherwise, and there was no more to be said.'

'Ay, I was an old fool. . . . Weel,' she continued after a pause, 'I'm no of the same mind to-day. The lassie's had enough French for a while. We'll take it off this quarter, and she can gie her time till other things.'

While she spoke Miss Hetherington turned her eyes from Mr. Lorraine to Marjorie, and she saw the girl's countenance fall.

'Miss Hetherington,' she said, 'what have I done? How have I annoyed you?'

'Hark till her!' broke in the lady with a grim smile : "what have I done and hoo have I annoyed you," because an old woman changes her mind. Marjorie, my bairn, I'm just anxious to do what I think will be for the best.'

'But—but there must be something,' began Marjorie, when her trembling voice warned her to be silent, and with quivering lips she turned away. Miss Hetherington watched her quietly ; when she turned again to Mr. Lorraine she saw that his eyes were also fixed upon the girl.

'Well, Mr. Lorraine,' she said sternly, 'is it to be as I say?'

The clergyman hesitated.

'Marjorie is a good girl, Miss Hetherington,' said he, 'and would be always anxious to do as you wish, but I think—I fear, she is sorry to give up her French studies.

'She's but a foolish lassie, and she may be glad that she has got elders to judge for her. She'll gie up French for the present, Mr. Lorraine, and by-and-by—weel, we shall see.'

This time Mr. Lorraine did not speak. He looked a little sadly at Marjorie, but he was quite man of the world enough to know that it would be a foolish thing to set Miss Hetherington's will at defiance. Besides, to his mind there was nothing so wonderful in the situation at all. Miss Hetherington had bought the right to be humoured. Ten to one her fancy would disappear as quickly as it had come, and Marjorie would be indulged again. Knowing her nature as he did, he attempted no further remonstrance, and when Miss Hetherington said again: 'Is that settled, Mr. Lorraine?' he answered mildly:

'Most certainly, Miss Hetherington, if you wish it. You have shown that you have Marjorie's interest at heart, and I have no doubt you are acting for the best.'

Miss Hetherington rose.

'Marjorie Annan,' said she, 'gie me your arm to the gate.'

Marjorie obeyed courteously enough. She assisted the lady to the gate and into her carriage, but when Miss Hetherington bent forward to kiss her cheek she shrank away.

'Marjorie, Marjorie,' she murmured, 'you think I'm a hard-hearted old woman, but I'm trying hard to be your friend.'

The carriage moved off. It had gone scarcely a hundred yards when the lady pulled the check string and ordered her coachman to change his course.

'Drive to the inn where the French teacher lives,' she said.

'They're telling me, my leddy, the Frenchman has gone to Dumfries!'

'Dumfries?'

'Aye, Miss Hetherington, to be ready for the school.'

'Then drive to Dumfries.'

The coachman obeyed, and turned his horse's head towards the Dumfries road.

When they reached the town they drove straight to Caussidière's lodgings, and with a very determined face the lady of the Castle descended and walked up the doorsteps.

She knocked sharply at the door, which was immediately opened by a servant girl.

'I'm seeking the gentleman that lodges here—the French teacher,' she said, stepping without ceremony into the lobby.

Caussidière, who was within, put his head out of the door of his room, and recognised his visitor at once with a beaming smile.

'Pray step this way, Miss Hetherington,' he cried. 'I am delighted to see you!'

She followed him into his little sitting-room, and stood leaning upon her staff and looking at him with her black eyes, while he drew forward a chair and begged her to be seated. She nodded grimly, and glanced round the apartment—at the table littered with correspondence, at the books scattered here and there, at the roses and creepers which peeped in at the open window. Then she walked to the chair he had prepared for her, and sitting down looked at him fixedly again.

Not in the least daunted he stood smiling at her, and waiting for her to explain her business.

At last she spoke in her native tongue.

'Do you ken what brought me here?' she asked sharply.

Caussidière shrugged his shoulders.

'I have not an idea,' he replied; 'and yet,' he added, 'I have been thinking—ah, perhaps it was a presentiment!—I have been thinking that I should have the pleasure!'

His tone, despite its extreme politeness, was significant enough to attract the attention of one so keen-witted.

'What do you mean by that?' she demanded, gazing at him as if to read his very soul.

'What I say, Miss Hetherington. I am *spirituel*, and have these presentiments. When I saw you first I knew that we

should become better acquainted. But will you talk to me in my own language, which you speak to admiration ?

‘I’ll speak till ye in simple English, my lad, or, what’s the same to my thinking, good Scots Doric. I’m here for plain speaking, and I’ll use nae heathen tongue this day. First and foremost, how muckle is Marjorie Annan owing ye for her French lessons ?’

As she asked the question, Miss Hetherington drew out an old-fashioned silk purse and began examining its contents. Finding that the Frenchman did not reply, she looked up and repeated it.

‘How muckle is Marjorie Annan owing ye ? Tell me that, if you please.’

‘Nothing, Miss Hetherington,’ he replied.

‘Naething ? Then Marjorie has paid ye already, maybe ?’

‘Yes, she has paid me,’ returned Caussidière quietly. Naturally enough his manner had changed, and his courteous smile had given way to a cold expression of *hauteur*, tempered with gentle indignation.

‘How muckle has she paid ye ?’ demanded the lady of the Castle.

‘She has paid me,’ answered the Frenchman, ‘with her sympathy, with her sweet society. I have not taken money from her ; I shall never take it. My labour, Miss Hetherington, has been labour of love.’

The lady’s eyes flashed, and putting up her purse she uttered an impatient exclamation.

‘Nae doubt !’ she cried. ‘But from this day forward your labour’s done. I have come here to pay you your hire, and to tell you with my ain mouth that Marjorie Annan’s French lessons are ended, and that if she needs mair she’ll get them from another teacher.’

Caussidière flushed angrily, but still preserved his composure. He gazed earnestly and thoughtfully at his visitor for some moments, and then said with the same peculiar smile he had worn at first :

'May I ask *you* a question, Miss Hetherington?'

'If you please.'

'I should like to know what authority you have to act on behalf of my dear pupil? I don't ask out of mere curiosity; but you would oblige me by informing me if the young lady herself has requested you to come here on so peculiar an errand?'

'The young lady?—a bairn, who kens naething of the world!'

'But, pardon me, had you her authority to dismiss me, or that of her guardian?'

'The bairn's a bairn, and the minister's foolish and old. I've taen the business into my own hands!'

'Indeed!' exclaimed Caussidière, still sarcastically smiling.

'Aye, indeed!' repeated the lady with growing irritation. 'And I warn you, once and for a', to cease meddling with the lassie. Aye, ye may smile! But you'll smile, maybe, on the wrong side o' your face, my friend, if ye dinna tak' the warning I bring ye, and cease molesting Marjorie Annan.'

It was clear that Caussidière was amused. Instead of smiling now, he laughed outright; still most politely, but with a self-satisfaction which was very irritating to his opponent. Subduing his amusement with an effort, he quietly took a chair, and sat down opposite Miss Hetherington.

'Weel,' she cried, striking with her staff upon the floor, 'what's your answer to my message?'

'You must give me a little time; you have so taken me by surprise. In the first place, why do you object to my friendship for the young lady? My interest in her is great; I respect and admire her beyond measure. Why can we not be friends? Why can I not continue to be her teacher?'

'A bonnie teacher! A braw friend! Do you think I'm blind?'

'I think,' said Caussidière with a mocking bow, 'that your eyes are very wide open, Miss Hetherington. You perceive quite clearly that I *love* Miss Annan.'

The lady started angrily.

‘What?’ she cried.

‘I love her, and hope some day, with your permission, to make her my wife.’

Trembling from head to foot, Miss Hetherington started to her feet.

‘Your wife!’ she echoed, as if thunderstruck.

‘Why not?’ asked Caussidière, calmly. ‘I am not rich, but I am a gentleman; and my connections are honourable, I assure you. Why, then, should you distrust me so? If you will permit me, I think I can give you very good reasons for approving of my union with Miss Annan.’

‘How daur ye think of it!’ cried Miss Hetherington. ‘Marry that bairn! I forbid ye even to come near her, to speak wi’ her again.’

Caussidière shrugged his shoulders.

‘Let us return, if you please, to where we began. You have not yet informed me by what right you attempt to interfere with the happiness of my dear pupil.’

‘By what right?’

‘Precisely. What may be the nature of your *relationship* to the young lady?’

As he spoke he fixed his eyes keenly upon her, to her obvious embarrassment. Her pale face grew paler than ever, though her eyes flashed dangerously.

‘I’m Marjorie Annan’s friend,’ she answered after a pause.

‘Of that I’m aware, Miss Hetherington. I am aware, also, that you have been very kind to her, that you have assisted her from childhood with large sums out of your own pocket. May I ask, without offence, have you done all this out of pure philanthropy, because you have such a charitable heart?’

He still watched her with the same half-sarcastic penetrating look. Her embarrassment increased, and she did not reply; but her lips became dry, and she moistened them nervously with the tip of her tongue.

Suddenly his manner changed, and he rose smiling from his seat.

'You are fatigued,' he said politely. 'Let me offer you a glass of wine.'

She declined the offer with an angry gesture, and moved towards the door.

'I hae warned you,' she said in a low voice. 'I hae warned you, and forbidden you. If ye dinna heed my warning I'll maybe find other means to bring you to your senses.'

She would have left the house, but quietly approaching the door, he set his back against it and blocked the way.

'Pray do not go yet,' he said. 'Pardon me, but you *must* not. You have given me your message, my dear Miss Hetherington; now let me ask you to hear mine.'

There was something in his manner so ominous, so significant, that the lady again became startled.

'What's your will with *me*?' she cried impatiently.

'Will you sit and listen a little while?'

'I'll stand where I am. Weel?'

'First let me thank you for the kindness of your servant in showing me over the beautiful castle where you live. I am interested in all old houses, and yours is charming.'

She stared at him in blank amazement.

'The Castle! when were ye there?'

'Just before I returned to Dumfries. I regretted that you were not at home in order that I might ask your kind permission; but in your absence I took the liberty of making a *reconnaissance*. I came away delighted with the place. The home of your ancestors, I presume?'

The words were innocent enough, but the speaker's manner was far from assuring, and his eyes, keenly fixed on hers, still preserved that penetrating light—almost a threat.

'Deil tak' the man! Why do you glower at me like that? You entered my house like a thief, then, when I was awa'?'

'Ah, do not say that; it is ungenerous. I went merely as

an amateur to see the ruins, and I found—what shall I say?—so much more than I expected.’

He paused, while she stood trembling, then he continued :

‘The Castle is so picturesque, the ruin so *ravissante*, and the pictures—the pictures are so romantic and so strange. Ah, it is a privilege indeed to have such a heritage and such an ancestry; to belong to a family so great, so full of honour; to have a ‘scutcheon without one blot since the day when the first founder wore it on his shield.’

It was clear that he was playing with her, laughing at her. As he proceeded, his manner became almost aggressive in its studied insolence, its polite sarcasm. Unable any longer to restrain her anger, Miss Hetherington, with outstretched hand, moved towards the door.

‘Stand awa’, and let me pass!’

He obeyed her in a moment, and with a profound bow, drew aside; but as she passed him, and put her trembling hand upon the door-handle, he said in a low voice close to her ear :

‘It would be a pity, perhaps, after all, to quarrel with one who knows so much.’

She turned furiously, and fixed her eyes upon him.

‘What’s that?’ she cried

‘Who knows so much, let us say, about the morals of your bonnie Scotland, as compared with those of *la belle France*.’

‘What do you mean? Speak out! What do ye mean?’

He smiled, and bending again close to her ear, he whispered something which drove the last tint of blood from her cheek, and made her stagger and gasp as if about to fall. Then, before she could recover herself, or utter a single word, he said aloud, with the utmost politeness :.

‘And now, my dear lady, will you stay a little while longer and talk with me about Marjorie Annan?’

CHAPTER XV.

MARJORIE GOES AWAY.

WHEN Miss Hetherington left the Frenchman's rooms that afternoon she tottered like one enfeebled by the sudden on-coming of age. Monsieur Caussidière was beside her; it was his hand which placed her in her carriage, his head which bowed politely as the carriage moved away. But the lady seemed neither to see nor hear. Her face was deathly pale and her eyes were fixed; she entered the carriage mechanically, and mechanically lay back among the moth-eaten cushions; but she never came to herself until the carriage stopped before the door of Annandale Castle.

The approaching carriage wheels had been heard by the inmates of the Castle, so that when the vehicle stopped, there stood Sandie Sloane ready to assist his mistress to alight. With her usual erect carriage and firm tread, Miss Hetherington stepped from the vehicle and walked up the stone steps to the Castle door, saying as she passed the old serving man :

‘Sandie Sloane, come ben wi’ me!’

She walked on, Sandie following. They walked into the great dining-room, and the door closed upon the two.

What passed at that interview no one knew; but half-an-hour later Sandie came forth, returned to the kitchen, and sat there crying like a heart-broken child.

‘Mysie,’ said he to the housekeeper, ‘Mysie, woman, I’m turned awa’—oot on the world. God help me. The mistress has shown me the door o’ Annandale Castle.’

Before Mysie could reply the bell rang violently. She ran up the stairs, entered the dining-room, and found Miss Hetherington still sitting in her cloak and bonnet, and looking strangely disturbed.

‘Mysie,’ she said, ‘where is Sandie Sloane?’

'In the kitchen, my lady.'

'In ten minutes you'll come back to me and tell me that he has left the Castle. Do you understand?'

'I do, my lady, but——'

'Mysie, listen to me. You hae been a good servant to me, and I want to be a good mistress to you, therefore I warn you. From this night forth, if ever you allow Sandie Sloane or any other *man* to cross the threshold o' this house without my express permission, out you go like Sandie. 'Tis the men that bring all the harm and all the sorrow that ever came into the world. Now go, Mysie, and dinna come back till you tell me that Sandie is awa.'

It was not till two days later that Mr. Lorraine, happening to call at the Castle, heard that Miss Hetherington could not see him, for she had taken to her bed, and was seriously ill. He heard also from Mysie, who seemed scared and wild, that her mistress had never been herself since that night when Sandie Sloane had been driven from his situation. The clergyman, much shocked and mystified, asked to be allowed to see the lady, but Mysie, remembering her mistress's instructions, refused to permit him to place his foot inside the door. After a little persuasion, however, she consented to allow him to remain on the threshold while she went and informed her mistress of his call.

In a short time the woman returned, and Mr. Lorraine was at once admitted to the bedside of the mistress of the house.

Mr. Lorraine began forthwith to express his regret at the lady's illness, but he was at once stopped.

'*'Twasna'* of mysel' I wanted to speak,' she said, in her hard cold tones; '*'twas* o' something that concerns you far more—*'twas* of one dear to you—*'twas* of Marjorie Annan?'

'Of Marjorie?'

'Aye—do ye mind, Mr. Lorraine, when you first showed me the mite o' a bairnie I gave ye some money, and I told you I'd do what I could to help you wi' the burden? Do ye ken why I did that, Mr. Lorraine?'

'Because you had a kind heart, Miss Hetherington, and were sorry for the little one.'

'Sorry! aye, that was it. I was sorry for her then—but now it's both sorrow and love, Mr. Lorraine. I'm a foolish old woman you'll say, but the bairn has found her way to my hard heart—as surely as you love her, Mr. Lorraine, I love her mysel'.'

Mr. Lorraine was silent, for he was growing rather perplexed. What did it all mean? Suddenly an idea came to him. Miss Hetherington wanted a reward for her past kindnesses—the time had come when they could all be repaid. She was ill and alone, she wished Marjorie to nurse her. A poor return enough when all was said and done for the kindnesses Marjorie had received!

Mr. Lorraine was about to make the offer when he suddenly paused, remembering the difficulty he had always had in getting Marjorie to visit the Castle at all. How could they possibly induce her to take her place, for weeks perhaps, beside the sick bed of its mistress? He was still sitting in perplexed silence when Miss Hetherington spoke.

'Mr. Lorraine,' said she, 'where is Marjorie?'

'Marjorie is at the manse,' returned the clergyman, dreading what the next question might be.

'At the manse! and wherefore is she no at the school? She should hae gone back ere this.'

'Yes, she should have gone, but the lassie was not herself, so I kept her with me. She is troubled in her mind at what you said about the French lessons, Miss Hetherington, and she is afraid she has annoyed you.'

'And she would be sorry?'

'How could she fail to be? You have been her best friend.'

There was a great pause, which was broken by Miss Hetherington.

'Mr. Lorraine,' said she, 'I've aye tried to give you good advice about Marjorie. I kened weel that twa silly men, like

yersel' and that fool Solomon Mucklebackit, wanted a woman's sharp wits and keen eyes to help them train the lassie. I've watched her close, and I see what maybe you dinna see, Therefore, I advise you again—send her awa' to Edinburgh for a while—'twill be for her gude.'

'To Edinburgh?'

'Aye; do you fear she'll no obey?'

'Not at all; when I tell her you wish it she will ge.'

Miss Hetherington sat bolt upright, and stared round the room like a stag at bay.

'I wish it!' she exclaimed. 'I dinna wish it—mind that, Mr. Lorraine. If onybody daurs say I wish it ye'll tell them 'tis a lee. *You* wish it; *you'll* send her awa'; 'tis for the bairn's good!'

Mr. Lorraine began to be of opinion that Miss Hetherington's brain was affected; he could not account for her eccentricity in any other way. Nevertheless her whims had to be attended to, and as in this case they would cause no great inconvenience he promised implicit obedience to her will.

'Yes, you are right, Miss Hetherington; 'twill do the child good, and she shall go,' he said as he rose to take his leave.

But the lady called him back.

'Mr. Lorraine,' she said, 'send Marjorie up to me to say good-bye;' and having again promised to obey her, Mr. Lorraine retired.

When he reached home he was rather relieved to find that his foster-child was out; when she returned he was busily engaged with Solomon; and it was not indeed until after evening prayers that the two found themselves alone. Then Mr. Lorraine summoned Marjorie to his side, took her head between his hands, and kissed her fondly upon the brow.

'Marjorie, my doo,' he said. 'I've been thinking to-day I would give you a change. I shall send you away for a few days, Marjorie, to my sister's house in Edinburgh.'

The girl opened her eyes with troubled wonder.

'You are going to send me away?' she said. 'Ah, Mr. Lorraine, are you angry with me too?'

'Angry with you? Angry with my Marjorie?—no, my darling, it is not that. I am afraid I am too fond of you, my bairn. I have been selfish, and kept you o'er much by my side. I shall miss you, Marjorie, for you brought sunshine and happiness with you when you first entered the old manse door, but I shall get my reward when I see my bairn come back to me with roses in her cheeks again.'

The girl clung to him, and her gentle eyes filled with tears.

'Oh, Mr. Lorraine,' she said, 'do not send me away.'

'Why, Marjorie, my bairn, why are you so sad? You talk as if we should never meet again. After all, 'tis but for a short while, and 'twill be better for us all. You'll see braw things in Edinburgh, and when you come home you can brighten up Solomon and me with the stories of what you have seen. It will be like living through our youth again to hear you, Marjorie!'

Marjorie patted his hand and smiled through her tears. Yet despite her attempt at cheerfulness she felt very sad. Was it a foreshadowing of the future? Perhaps; for something told her even then that the parting from her dear foster-father was to be long and sad.

The next day, however, she was brighter; they could hear her singing about the house as she collected her things together, and now and then she would run into the little parlour where Mr. Lorraine sat busily at work upon his Sunday sermon, and ask him to talk to her again of all the wonders she was going to see.

By early in the afternoon all was done, and, as Marjorie was to start early on the morrow, she, in obedience to Mr. Lorraine's wish, put on her bonnet and went up to the Castle to wish Miss Hetherington good-bye.

She had heard from Mr. Lorraine that the lady was indis-

posed, but he had not spoken of the malady as serious, and she was, therefore, utterly unprepared for what she saw.

She was admitted by Mysie, conducted along the dreary passage, and led at once towards Miss Hetherington's bedroom.

'She's waitin' on ye,' said Mysie; 'she's been waitin' on ye all the day.'

Marjorie stepped into the room, looked round, and then shrank fearfully back towards the door. Could this be Miss Hetherington—this little, shrivelled old woman, with the dim eyes and thin, silvery hair? She glanced keenly at Marjorie; then, seeing the girl shrink away, she held forth her hand and said:

'Come awa' ben, Marjorie, my bairnie; come ben.'

'You—you are not well, Miss Hetherington,' said Marjorie. 'I am so sorry!'

She came forward and stretched forth her hand. Miss Hetherington took it, held it, and gazed up into the girl's face.

'I'm no just mysel', Marjorie,' she said; 'but whiles the best of us come to this pass. Did ye think I was immortal, Marjorie Annan, and that the palsied finger o' death couldna be pointed at me as weel as at another?'

'Of death!' said Marjorie, instinctively withdrawing her hand from the old lady's tremulous grasp. 'Oh, Miss Hetherington, you surely will not die?'

'Wha can tell? Surely I shall die when my time comes, and who will there be to shed a tear?'

Marjorie looked at her sadly, but said nothing. The tones were peevish, the face looked awful and old. Some great change had taken place in her protectress which Marjorie could not comprehend.

For a time there was silence, then Miss Hetherington spoke:

'What more have you got to say to me, Marjorie Annan?'

The girl started as from a dream, and rose hurriedly from her seat.

'Nothing more,' she said. 'Mr. Lorraine thought I had better come and wish you good-bye. I am going away!'

‘Mr. Lorraine ; you didna wish it yersel’ ?

‘Yes I—I wished it——’

‘Aweel, good-bye !’

She held forth her trembling hands again, and Marjorie placed her warm fingers between them.

‘Good-bye, Miss Hetherington.’

She withdrew her hand and turned away, feeling that the good-bye had been spoken, and that her presence was no longer desired by the proud mistress of Annandale. She had got half-way to the door when her steps were arrested—a voice called her back.

‘Marjorie ! Marjorie Annan !’

She turned, started, then running back fell on her knees beside Miss Hetherington’s chair. For the first time in her life Marjorie saw her crying.

‘Dear Miss Hetherington, what is it ?’ she said.

‘’Tis the old tale, the old tale,’ replied the lady, drying her eyes. ‘Won’t you kiss me, Marjorie, and say only once that you’re sorry to leave me sickening here ?’

‘I am very sorry,’ said Marjorie, then she timidly bent forward and touched the lady’s cheek with her lips.

Curiously enough, after having solicited the embrace, Miss Hetherington shrank away.

‘Cold and loveless,’ she murmured. ‘But Marjorie, my bairn, I’m no blaming ye for the sins o’ your forbears. Good-bye, lassie, good-bye.’

This time Marjorie did leave the room and the Castle, feeling thoroughly mystified as to what it could all mean.

But both the interview and the eccentric manner of the old lady soon went out of her mind. When she reached the manse she found she had still many preparations to make. Early the next morning, after bidding an affectionate good-bye to her two foster-fathers, she started on her journey to Edinburgh.

CHAPTER XVI.

BY THE FIRTH OF FORTH.

ON the outskirts of the town of Leith, and on the direct road of communication between Leith and Edinburgh, stood the plain abode of the Rev. Mungo Menteith, minister of the Free Kirk of Scotland. The church itself lay within a stone's throw; and from the upper windows of the house was seen, on the one hand, a panorama of the busy waters of the Firth and the distant shores of Fife, and on the other the heights of Arthur's Seat, towering high above the clustering habitations of 'Auld Reekie.'

The Rev. Mr. Menteith had espoused, late in life, the only sister of Mr. Lorraine, a little timid clinging woman, with fair hair and light blue eyes, who was as wax in the bony hands of her pious husband. The clergyman—a tall, cadaverous man of fifty, with cavernous eye-sockets, a beetling brow, and a saturnine complexion—was a pillar of the Church and a shining light to an admiring congregation. No preacher, even in Scotland, distributed the threats of eternal perdition with more impartial relish, or was so far removed from spiritual backsliding in any question of gloomy Calvinistic dogma.

At the house of this pair, one morning in early summer, arrived Marjorie Annan, escorted thither in a hired fly from Edinburgh by the minister. It was by no means her first visit, and the welcome she received, if a little melancholy, was not altogether devoid of sympathy. Her aunt was an affectionate creature, though weak and superstitious; and Mr. Menteith, like many of his class, was by no means as hard as the doctrines he upheld. They had no children of their own, and the coming of one so pretty and so close of kin was like a gleam of sunshine.

So Marjorie was soon at home. Her bedroom at the top of

the house commanded a pleasant view of land and sea, and the busy prospect seemed quite delightful to her simple gaze, accustomed to the quiet places of a sleepy country town. True, there was a good deal of gloomy praying and much talk of a solemn turn, but Marjorie was used to all that, having spent all her days, as it were, in the shadow of the Church.

A week passed away, with one supernaturally, dreary Sabbath, spent in what may be called, figuratively, wailing and gnashing of teeth. The week-days were spent by Marjorie in visiting friends of the family, in quiet *têtes-à-têtes* with Mrs. Menteith, and in country and seaside walks alone. Her bright face and pretty figure soon became familiar objects in Leith and its vicinity.

At last there came one day of terrific dissipation, when what is known by profane Scotchmen as a 'tea and cookie shine' was given by one of the elders of the kirk. There were cakes of all kinds, tea and coffee in profusion, and much extempore discoursing by divers reverend gentlemen. To a young girl accustomed to the gay world, the whole affair might have seemed dismal enough, but to Marjorie it was quite delightful. It was something at least to see society of some sort, and to chat, even in the Church's shadow, with young people of her own age.

Early in the evening, Mr. Menteith was called away, and when the meeting broke up at about nine o'clock, Marjorie and her aunt had to walk home alone. It was a fine moonlight night; and as they left the elder's house and lingered on the doorstep, Marjorie saw standing in the street a figure which she seemed to know.

She started and looked again, and the figure returned her look. In a moment, to her utter amazement, she recognised Caussidière.

Startled and afraid, not knowing what to say or do, she descended the steps by her aunt's side.

As she did so, the figure disappeared.

She walked on up the street, trembling and wondering, while

Mrs. Menteith talked with feeble rapture of the feast they had left and its accompanying 'edification.'

'Did you take notice of Mr. Montgomery, Marjorie? He was only ordained last hairst, and they're telling me he has a call to Strathpepper already. He seemed muckle taken with yourself.'

Mr. Montgomery was a cadaverous young man, with large feet and large red hands; and Marjorie had indeed noticed his admiration, finding it very disagreeable.

'When you marry, Marjorie,' continued her aunt, 'and you'll be marrying some day, I hope and pray it will be a member of our Kirk—best of all, a minister like your uncle. Mr. Ferguson, the linen-draper, is a marrying man—him with the long beard and the glasses; he's just for all the world like the picture of an Apostle.'

Marjorie laughed nervously.

'I'm not thinking of marrying,' she replied.

'Weel, there's time enough. But marriage with a holy man is a sheaf of blessing. What thought you of young Mr. Spence, who sat by your side and handed you the currant bun?'

Marjorie made some wandering reply, paying little heed to the question, for at that moment she heard footsteps behind her. Glancing over her shoulder she saw the figure she had previously noticed following at a few yards' distance.

She would have paused and waited, but she dreaded the observation of her companion. So she simply walked faster, hurrying her aunt along.

They passed from the street, and still she heard the feet following behind her. At last they reached the gate of the minister's house.

Here Marjorie lingered, and glancing down the road saw the figure pause and wait.

Mrs. Menteith pushed open the gate, hastened across the garden, and knocked at the door. In a moment the figure came up rapidly,

‘Hush, mademoiselle!’ said a familiar voice in French; and simultaneously she felt a piece of paper pressed into her hand. She grasped it involuntarily, and before she could utter a word the figure flitted away.

Meantime the house door had opened.

‘Marjorie!’ cried Mrs. Menteith from the threshold.

Marjorie hastened in.

‘What kept ye at the gate? and who was yon that passed?’

‘A man—a gentleman.’

‘Did he speak to you?’

Without replying, Marjorie passed in.

As soon as possible she hastened up to her own room, locked the door, and there with trembling fingers unfolded the paper and read as follows:

‘I have something important to say to you. Meet me to-morrow at noon on the Edinburgh Road. Pray tell no one that you have received this, or that I am here.’

‘LÉON CAUSSIDIÈRE.’

Marjorie sat down trembling, with the paper in her lap. She read it again and again, and as she did so her wonder grew. What had brought her French teacher to Leith, and why had he appeared in so mysterious a manner?

She felt frightened and suspicious, yet she could not disguise from herself that the unexpected *rencontre* gave her a curious thrill of pleasure. He had come thither in pursuit of *her*, that was clear; and his request for a secret meeting, unknown to her friends, had a significance not to be mistaken.

Her first impulse was to inform her aunt of what had taken place. A little reflection, however, convinced her that this would be undesirable.

‘After all,’ she thought, ‘she had no right to assume that Caussidière’s message had not a perfectly innocent significance. Perhaps he had brought her news from home?’

A little later, just before she retired to rest, she drew the

curtain of her room and looked out. The moon was shining brightly, and a figure stood at the gate gazing at the house. It was impossible to distinguish it very clearly, but she thought that she again recognised Caussidière.

Fluttering and flushing with a new fear, which was almost akin to a new delight, she went to bed ; but before her eyes were closed in slumber she had resolved to meet Caussidière at the appointed place next day.

It was not an easy task for Marjorie to keep her appointment on the following day ; indeed, everything seemed to conspire to keep her at home. To begin with, the family were much later than usual ; then it seemed to Marjorie that the prayers were unusually long ; then Mr. Menteith had various little things for her to do ; so that the hands of the clock wandered towards twelve before she was able to quit the house.

At last she was free, and with palpitating heart and trembling hands was speeding along the road to meet the Frenchman.

It was half an hour past the appointed time when she neared the trysting-place, and she was beginning to wonder whether or not Monsieur Caussidière had grown weary and had gone away, when to her relief he emerged from some nook where he had been hiding and stood before her. Yes, it was he, looking anxious and restless, but brightening up considerably at sight of her face.

Now that the meeting had really come about, Marjorie felt somewhat abashed at the thought of her own boldness. She paused in some confusion, and timidly held forth her hand ; but the Frenchman strode boldly forward, and, the place being lonely, took her in his arms.

‘ Marjorie, my Marjorie,’ he murmured.

Both words and action took her so completely by surprise, that for a moment she could do nothing but tremble passively in his embrace, like a trembling, frightened child ; then recovering herself, she drew back, blushing and trembling.

‘ Monsieur—Monsieur Caussidière !’ she cried.

The Frenchman looked at her strangely; he took her hand, and held it lovingly in both of his.

‘Marjorie,’ he said, ‘my little friend! It seems, now that I have you by me, that I am born again. I have travelled all the way from Dumfries to see you; and do you know why?—because, my child, you have taught me to love you!’

Marjorie paused in her walk; she felt her heart throbbing painfully, and her cheeks burning like fire. She looked up at him in helpless amazement, but she did not speak.

‘When you departed, Marjorie,’ continued Caussidière, affectionately clasping the little hand which still lay passively in his, ‘I felt as if all the light and sunshine had been withdrawn from the world, and I knew then that the face of my little friend had left such an image on my heart that I could not shake it away. I tried to fight against the feeling, but I could not. You have made me love you, my darling; and now I have come to ask you if you will be *my wife*!’

‘Your wife, monsieur!’

Marjorie could say no more. It was the first time such a proposal had been made to her, and it fairly took away her breath. Did she love Monsieur Caussidière? She did not know. Several times while laying awake at night she had pondered over the question, but she had never once thought of the possibility of becoming united to him. And now her feeling was one of amazement, that he who was so accomplished and highly gifted should deign to make such a proposition to Marjorie Annan—a little waif who had been born of the water and reared on the bread of charity.

She looked so helplessly perplexed that the Frenchman smiled.

‘Well, Marjorie,’ he said, ‘of what are you thinking, *ma petite*?’

‘I was wondering, monsieur, why you had spoken to me as you have done.’

For a moment the man’s face clouded; then the shadow passed and he smiled again.

‘Because I adore you, Marjorie,’ he said.

Again the girl was silent, and the Frenchman pulled his moustachios with trembling fingers. Presently he stole a glance at her, and he saw that her face was irradiated with a look of dreamy pleasure. He paused before her, and regained possession of her trembling hands.

‘Marjorie,’ he said, and as he spoke his voice grew very tender and vibrated through every nerve in the girl’s frame, ‘my little Marjorie, if you had been left to me, I don’t think I should ever have spoken, but when you did go away I felt as if the last chance of happiness had been taken from me. So I said, “I will go to my little girl, I will tell her of my loneliness, I will say to her I have given her my love, and I will ask for hers in return.” Marjorie, *will* you give it me, my dear?’

She raised her eyes to his and answered softly :

‘I like you very much, monsieur.’

‘And you will marry me, Marjorie?’

‘I—I don’t know that.’

‘Marjorie!’

‘I mean, monsieur, I will tell Mr. Lorraine.’

‘You will not!—you must not!’

‘Monsieur!’

‘Marjorie, do you not see what I mean? They are all against me, everyone of them, and if they knew they would take my little girl away. Marjorie, listen to me. You say you love me, and you *do* love me, I am sure of that, therefore I wish you to promise to marry me and say nothing to any soul.’

‘To marry you in secret? Oh, I could not do that, monsieur!’

‘Then you do not love me, Marjorie?’

‘Indeed, it is not true. And Mr. Lorraine is like my father, and he loves me so much. I would not do anything to vex or hurt him, monsieur.’

For a moment the Frenchman’s face was clouded, and he cast a most ominous look upon the girl; then all in a moment again the sunshine burst forth.

‘You have a kind heart, Marjorie,’ he said. ‘It is like my little girl to talk so, but she is sensible, and will listen to me. Marjorie, don’t think I want to harm you, or lead you to do wrong. I love you far too well, little one, and my only thought is how I can keep and cherish you all my life.’

It must not be supposed that Marjorie was altogether proof against such wooing as this. She believed that the Frenchman was incapable of deceit, and though at first the proposal had given her a shock, she soon came to think in listening to his persuasive voice that she was the one to blame. He was so much wiser than she, and he knew so much more of the world; and he loved her so much that he would never counsel her amiss. Marjorie did not consent to his wish, for it is not in a moment that we can wipe away the deeply instilled prejudice of a lifetime, but she finally promised to think it over and see him again.

He walked with her to within a quarter of a mile of the clergyman’s gate, then he left her.

During the rest of that day Marjorie went about in a sort of dream, and it was not until she had gone to bed at night that she was able to think dispassionately of the interview. She reviewed all that he had said to her, and was astonished to find how little his proposal seemed to shock her. Of course she still held to her first opinion that an open straightforward course of action would be the best. Besides, now that she knew that Caussidière loved her, she had an inexpressible longing to kneel at her dear father’s feet, and tell him of her great joy and happiness; but then came the dread of which Caussidière had spoken, the fear that Mr. Lorraine might refuse his consent and separate her from her lover for ever. There certainly was a possibility of this, and now that she was alone Marjorie freely acknowledged the danger.

She herself had noticed that, though at first Mr. Lorraine had been kindly disposed to the Frenchman, yet that latterly his feeling seemed to have changed. Miss Hetherington’s will,

paramount in this as in all things, had made the clergyman take her view of the matter, and the Frenchman had suffered accordingly. But why were they all so prejudiced against him? What was his crime? Simply the most venial crime of all, that of being unfortunate! He was an exile, friendless, and poor, and so all doors were shut against him.

Marjorie saw, or thought she saw, the injustice of it all, and her affectionate little heart rose in revolt.

The next day she went to meet the Frenchman again. The moment he saw her face he knew that in leaving her to reason out the problem he had done well.

She came forward with all the confidence of a child, and said:

‘Monsieur Caussidière, since I love you, I will trust you with all my heart.’

Oh, the days which followed, the hours of blissful dreamy joy! Marjorie went every day to meet her lover; each day found her happier than she had been before. He was good and kind, and her love for him increased; his reasoning seemed logical as well as pleasant, and it was beginning to take a firm hold of her accordingly.

What he might eventually have persuaded her to do it is difficult to imagine, but an event happened which for the time being saved her from precipitation.

She had left her lover one day, promising to think over his proposition of an immediate secret marriage, and give him her decision on the following morning.

She walked along the road with her head filled with the old and still perplexing problem, but the moment she reached her home all such thoughts were rudely driven from her head. She found Mrs. Menteith in the parlour crying bitterly. Mr. Menteith, pale and speechless, stood by her side with an open telegram in his hand.

‘What is the matter?’ asked Marjorie.

Taking the telegram from the minister’s unresisting grasp she read as follows:

‘Send Marjorie home at once. Mr. Lorraine is dangerously ill.’

The girl sank with a low cry upon the ground ; then with an effort she rose and cried :

‘Let me go to him ; let me go home.’

Not once that night did Marjorie remember Caussidière or her appointment with him on the following day. Her one thought now was of Mr. Lorraine. She hurriedly collected together her few belongings, and that very night she left for home.

CHAPTER XVII.

TWO MARJORIES.

It was a raw, wet, windy night, when Marjorie arrived at the railway station of Dumfries. Scarcely had the train reached the platform when the figure of a young man leapt upon the foot-board and looked in at the carriage window, while a familiar voice addressed her by name.

She looked round, as she stood reaching down some parcels and a small hand-bag from the net above her seat, and recognised John Sutherland.

‘They have sent me to meet you,’ he said, stretching out his hand. ‘I have a dog-cart waiting outside the station to drive you down.’

She took the outstretched hand eagerly, quite forgetful of the angry words with which they had last parted, and cried in a broken voice :

‘Oh, Johnnie, is he better?’

The young man’s face looked grave indeed as he replied :

‘He is about the same. He is very weak, and has been asking for you. But come, let me look after your luggage, and then we’ll hurry down.’

There were few passengers and little luggage by the train, and they found Marjorie's small leather trunk standing almost by itself on the platform. A porter shouldered it, and, following him, they passed out of the station and found a solitary dog-cart waiting, with a ragged urchin at the horse's head. A few minutes later Marjorie and Sutherland were driving rapidly side by side through the dark and rain-washed streets of the town.

Then, while he held the reins and guided the animal—a fast-trotting country cob—Sutherland explained, in fragmentary sentences, all that had occurred.

On the previous Sunday, just after concluding his usual sermon, Mr. Lorraine had been seized by a curious faintness, consequent on a sharp spasm at the heart, and had with difficulty dismissed his congregation; then, tottering like a man death-stricken, he had passed into the vestry and fallen, almost insensible, into the arms of his clerk and sexton. Presently he had recovered sufficiently to crawl, with Solomon's assistance, over to the manse; but on his arrival there the painful symptoms increased, and he was undressed and placed in bed. The village doctor, called in hurriedly, had first prescribed brandy and water, which the patient, staunch in his teetotalism, firmly refused to take; and, after some delay, the doctor had substituted a medicinal stimulant. During the night Mr. Lorraine had continued in great suffering, with frequent recurrence of the pectoral spasms. By the next morning, though incredibly weakened in the short space of time that had occurred since his first seizure, he seemed rather better.

But within the next twenty-four hours the symptoms, ominous from the beginning, became still more grave, and he alternated between sharp attacks of pain and periods of semi-stupor. Then, in the pauses of one of the attacks, he had first asked for Marjorie, for whom the telegram had been despatched at once.

Sobbing wildly, while the wind and rain smote her in the face, Marjorie listened and questioned. She was so young and inexperienced in sorrow that even yet she did not realise the possi-

bility of a mortal loss ; and, indeed, Sutherland, anxious to spare her, made the picture he was drawing as little dark as possible.

It was a dreary drive ; and Marjorie, through her tears, saw the dull lights of the town disappear, the houses and hedges glide darkly past her, till they came out upon the open country road, where the wind was wild and unrestrained, and the rain fell in torrents. The horse, knowing the road blindfold, splashed swiftly down through the darkness.

To Sutherland it was a sweet, though a mournful, experience. To feel the frail, beautiful form of the maid he loved trembling so close to him, to be so near to her with his affectionate protecting influence, to listen to her murmured inquiries, and to answer her with gentle words of comfort, seemed to make amends for much that was unhappy in the past. Again and again he felt the fond impulse to put his arm around her and soothe her with words of love ; but he lacked the courage, and, indeed, he felt that to obtrude his affection at that moment would be profanation.

Meanwhile he felt almost happy. That drive became memorable to him long afterwards, when darker days came, and he would gladly have prolonged it through the whole night.

But after little more than an hour it came to an end. Passing rapidly through the streets of the village, they at last draw up before the gate of the manse.

With an eager cry, half a sob, Marjorie leapt down.

‘I’ll put up the horse and come back,’ cried Sutherland.

Marjorie scarcely heard, but, opening the gate, ran in across the garden, and knocked softly at the manse door, which was opened almost instantly by Mysie, the old serving woman.

The moment she saw Marjorie she put her finger on her lips.

Marjorie stepped in, and the door was softly closed. Mysie led the way into the study, where a lamp was dimly burning.

‘Oh, Mysie, how is he now ?’

The woman's hard world-worn face was sad beyond expression, and her eyes were red with weeping.

'Wheesht, Miss Marjorie,' she answered, 'speak low. A wee while syne he sank into a bit sleep. He's awfu' changed! I'm thinkin' he'll no last mony hoors langer.'

'Oh, Mysie!' sobbed the girl convulsively.

'Wheesht, or he may hear ye! Bide here a minute and I'll creep ben and see if he has waukened.'

She stole from the room. In a few moments she returned to the door and beckoned. Choking down her emotion Marjorie followed her without a word.

They crossed the lobby and entered the rudely-furnished bedroom where Mr. Lorraine had slept so many years, and there in the very bed where the little foundling had been placed that wintry night long ago lay the minister—haggard, worn, and ghastly, with all the look of a man that was sinking fast. His white hair was strewn upon the pillow, his cheeks were sunken and ashen pale, and his dim blue eyes looked at vacancy, while his thin hand fingered the counterpane.

Marjorie crept closer with bursting heart and looked upon him. As she did so she became conscious of a movement at the foot of the bed. There kneeling in silence was old Solomon. He looked up with a face almost as grey and stony as that of his master, but gave no other sign of recognition.

The minister rocked his head from side to side, and continued to pick the coverlet, muttering to himself:

'Marjorie! Marjorie, my doo! Aye, put the bairn in my arms—she has your own eyes, Marjorie, your own eyes o' an heaven's blue. Solomon, my surplice! To-day's the christening. . . . We'll call her Marjorie, after her mother. . . . A bonnie name! A bonnie bairn! . . . Bring the light, Solomon! . . . She's wet and weary. We'll lay her down in the bed!'

At the mention of his name, Solomon rose like a gaunt spectre, and stood gazing desolately at his master. His eyes were wild and tearless, and he shook like a reed.

Marjorie drew nearer, till she stood close over the bed. The minister's eyes met hers, but showed no sign of recognition.

'Oh, Mr. Lorraine!' she sobbed. 'Do you not know me? It is Marjorie!'

He did not seem to hear.

'We were lass and lad—lass and lad. Solomon, my man, draw up your chair and light your pipe. Listen to the wind, Solomon—it's an awful night. Speak low, lest you waken the bairn—Marjorie's bairn. Is that Marjorie? Somebody's knocking at the door. Open, and let her in to the fire. Marjorie, my doo, what's that you're holding 'neath your shawl? Is it our bairn? You're wet, wet, and your face is like a dead woman's, and why do you moan and greet like that? I thought you were sleeping in the kirkyard. Aye, aye, I'm grey and old—but you're young still, Marjorie; young and bonnie for evermore. Come closer, Marjorie! There, lean your head upon my breast.'

As he spoke he seemed to clasp some visionary form in his embrace, while his wan face wore an expression of ineffable tenderness and beauty. Sobbing as if her heart would break, Marjorie reached out her hand and took the right hand of the minister, which lay out upon the coverlet; then overcome with emotion, she sank on her knees by the bedside.

There was a long silence, broken only by the sick man's feeble murmurs, which had now become almost inarticulate. Marjorie, with her face buried, prayed silently for the life of her guardian and benefactor.

Suddenly there was a low cry from Solomon. Marjorie started up, and at the same moment Mr. Lorraine half raised himself on his elbow and looked wildly around him.

'Who's there?' he moaned—'Marjorie!'

And for the first time his eyes seemed fixed on hers in actual recognition.

'Yes, Mr. Lorraine! Oh, speak to me!'

He did not answer, but still gazed upon her with a beautiful

smile. His hand was still in hers, and she felt it fluttering like a leaf. Suddenly the smile faded into a look of startled wonder and divine awe. He looked at Marjorie, but *through* her, as it were at something beyond.

'Marjorie!' he moaned, 'I'm coming!'

Alas! it was to another Marjorie, some shining presence un-
beheld of other eyes, that he addressed that last joyful cry. Scarcely had it left his lips than his jaw dropped convulsively, and he fell back upon his pillow dead.

* * * * *

When Marjorie came to herself—for in the pain and horror of that first experience of death she had fainted completely away—she found herself in the arms of Mysie, who tried to lead her from the room. She looked round, and there lay the minister white and cold, with Solomon bending over him and softly closing his eyes.

She uttered a wild cry and rushed to the bedside.

'Tak' the bairn awa', said Solomon, in a low voice.

'Oh, Solomon, is he dead indeed?' she cried, weeping wildly.

'Aye, he's gane!' replied the sexton, in a voice hollow as the sound of the church bell. 'Gane, and gane first!' he added, muttering to himself. 'Nae woman folk shall lay him oot. I hae sairved him leeving, and I'll sairve him deid. God rest ye, meenister! 'Twill soon be my turn—aye, aye, the sooner the better.'

At last Marjorie suffered herself to be led away. When she returned half-an-hour later, she found that all the last offices of death had been carefully and tenderly performed.

Washed, and dressed in a bedgown as white as snow, with his hair carefully combed and arranged, and his hand placed gently by his side, the minister lay, smiling as if asleep. On the coverlit lay the small household Bible which he had been accustomed to use at home. In a chair by the bedside Solomon sat watching, still without a tear.

'Oh, Solomon, may I kias him?' whispered Marjorie; and

without waiting for a reply, she bent down and touched the marble cheek with her warm young lips.

Ah, that icy kiss of Death! The cold beyond all living coldness, the inexpressible and awful sense of hopeless, eternal chill! She shrank in terror, being only a child.

‘Dinna greet, Marjorie!’ said Solomon. ‘Dae ye think, if he wasna ripe, he wad be gather’d? He was an auld, auld man; —aulder than me, and I’m auld enough. Does he no look bonnie and at peace? He preached the Word o’ God for nigh sixty years; he’ll never preach mair! He was a grand man and a grand preacher; I was prood to be his precentor and his servant. God rest his soul! Amen.’

The tone in which Solomon spoke was strangely monotonous and dreary, and he himself had almost the semblance of a dead man.

* * * * *

Let me draw a veil over the sorrow of that night, which was spent by poor Marjorie in uncontrollable grief. Sutherland, returning a little while after the minister’s breath had gone, tried in vain to comfort her, but remained in or about the house till break of day.

Early next morning, Miss Hetherington, driving up to the manse door in her faded carriage, heard the sad news. She entered in, looking grim and worn beyond measure, and looked at the dead man. Then she asked for Marjorie, and learned that she had retired to her room. As the lady returned to her carriage, she saw young Sutherland standing at the gate.

‘It’s all o’er at last, then,’ she said, ‘and Marjorie Annan has lost her best friend. Try to comfort her, Johnnie, if ye can.’

‘I’ll do that, Miss Hetherington,’ cried Sutherland eagerly.

‘The old gang and the young come,’ muttered the lady. ‘She’s alone now in the world, but I’m her friend still. When the funeral’s o’er she must come to stay a while wi’ ma. Will ye tell her that?’

'Yes, if you wish it.'

'Aye, I wish it. Poor bairn! It's her first puff o' the ill wind o' sorrow; but when she's as old as me she'll ken there are things in this world far waur than *death*.'

So saying she moved to her carriage, and entering it was slowly driven away. With a deep sigh Sutherland crossed to the manse door which he found open. Using his privilege of intimate friendship he entered the hall. As he did so he heard voices from the bedroom behind; he approached on tip-toe and looked into the room.

There, decently laid out in the darkened chamber, lay the body of the minister; and by the bedside was Solomon Mucklebackit in whispered consultation with Hew Moffatt, the local grocer and undertaker, who stood with measuring tape in hand.

'Let it be o' strang aik, Mister Hew, wi' brass heided nails, but plain and decent like himsel'. Hae ye the measure? Line it wi' white sawtin, a' complete. Weel, weel, I wis I was lying beside him, and there was room for twa.'

'It was awful sudden, was it no?' said the undertaker. 'I didna ken that the meenister was ailing. . . . Six foot frae heid till foot. What age will I put on the plate, Solomon?'

'Seeventy year and seven; and his name in fu'—the Rev. Sampson Lorraine.'

Here the eye of the sexton fell on Sutherland, who stood hesitating at the door.

'Come in, Johnnie Sutherland,' he said. 'Dinna stand glowering, but come ben. See, there he lies!'

Sutherland entered noiselessly, and stood reverently by the bed. Solomon approached his side, and joined him as he gazed at the dead man.

'In the midst o' life we are in death,' the sexton murmured. 'Did ye ever look on a bonnier corpse? As white and clean as a bairn, for his heart was pure. I'll dig his grave wi' my ain hands—nae ither man shall touch it. There's a peacefu' spot

close to the vestry window, and he shall rest *there*. Maybe he'll no' be angry if I lea' a corner near for mysel'. I hae been his servant a' these years, and I'll be near him when I dee. He was a kindly man, and never prood.'

Deeply affected, Sutherland stole from the room and entered the adjoining study. Solomon followed him, and continued to talk, as if muttering dreamily to himself.

'The funeral will be on Saturday. I hae sent word already to his sister and her gudeman, and nae doot they'll be here; and there will be heaps o' the neebours, nae doot, to pay him the last respects. You'll be there yoursel'?'

'Of course,' answered Sutherland. 'How is Marjorie?'

'She's upstairs greetin' in her room—ye canna see her. A lassie's tears! They flow easy as water, and siccan tears are soon mended.'

'I am sure she loved him very much,' interposed Sutherland, gently.

Solomon gazed grimly at the speaker, but made no reply. A few minutes later Sutherland left the dreary house.

* * * * *

The day of the funeral came. It broke bright and sunny, and long before the time fixed there was a goodly gathering round the churchyard gate, on the road, and in the little study, where the usual funeral bakemeats were spread for a few of the gentry.

Mrs. Menteith presided, having arrived with her husband on the previous day, and there were several clergymen from the surrounding districts. Miss Hetherington too had come over, and sat with her keen eyes fixed on Marjorie, who was pale and tolerably resigned.

Alas, that dismal last passage from the light of day to the gloom of the grave! Of all the company there, scarcely one save Marjorie showed any sign of abiding grief. As for Mrs. Menteith, the dead man's only kith and kin, she had lived in a world of gloom so long and had known so much personal sorrow

that she seemed little changed, save for a few external signs of grief. Young Sutherland, who was present, seemed greatly moved, but if the truth must be spoken his distress was more for the maiden he loved and *her* distress, than for the pure sense of bereavement.

The church bell tolled, and the company passed slowly across to the churchyard behind the oaken coffin, borne on the shoulders of four men, one of whom was the faithful Solomon.

Then, when the coffin was set down in the church, Solomon took his place as clerk, while the Rev. Mr. Menteith, in the dimmallest of voices, read the funeral service. Marjorie, sitting by the side of Mrs. Menteith, sobbed as if her heart must break.

Out into the still kirkyard, where the sun was brightly shining, and up to the verge of the open grave which Solomon had dug, as he had sworn to do, with his own hands. Then—‘ashes to ashes; dust to dust.’ As he sprinkled the first clay on the hard wood of the coffin, and looked down into the dark grave where it was lying, Solomon’s tears flowed freely for the first time.

‘Oh, meenister, meenister,’ he moaned; ‘why did ye gang first, and lea’ me lingering behind?’

When the cold earth fell into the grave, Marjorie uttered a low cry, and turned convulsively away. As she did so, she saw Caussidière, dressed in complete black, standing at a little distance, with his sad eyes fixed on hers.

CHAPTER XVIII.

‘THE WOOING O’T!’

THE few days which followed immediately upon the clergyman’s funeral, were the most wretched Marjorie had ever spent. Habited in her plain black dress, she sat at home in the little

parlour, watching with weary, wistful eyes the figures of Solomon and Mysie, who, similarly clad, moved like ghosts about her; and all the while her thoughts were with the good old man, who, after all, had been her only protector in the world.

While he had been there to cheer and comfort her she had never realised how far these others were from her. Now she knew; she was as one left utterly alone.

It was by her own wish that she remained at the manse. Mrs. Menteith, obliged after the funeral to return to her home, had offered to take Marjorie with her, and Miss Hetherington had sent a little note requesting her to make the Castle her home. Both of these invitations Marjorie refused.

To go to Edinburgh would take her too far from her beloved dead, while the thought of living with Miss Hetherington at Annandale Castle positively appalled her. So she said 'No.'

The lady of the Castle received the refusal kindly, saying that although Marjorie could not take up her residence at the Castle, she must not altogether avoid it.

'Come when you wish, my bairn,' concluded the old lady. 'You'll aye be welcome. We are both lonely women, now, and must comfort one another.'

During the first few days, however, Marjorie did not go. She sat at home during the day, and in the dusk of the evening, when she believed no one would see her, she went forth to visit the churchyard and cry beside her foster-father's grave. At length, however, she remembered the old lady's kindly words, and putting on her bonnet and a thick veil, she one morning set out on a visit to Annandale Castle.

Marjorie had not seen Miss Hetherington since that day she came down to the funeral; when, therefore, she was shown into the lady's presence she almost uttered a frightened cry. There sat the grim mistress of the Castle in state, but looking as worn and faded as her faded surroundings. Her face was pinched and worn as if with heart-eating grief or mortal disease. She received

the girl fondly, yet with something of her old imperious manner; and during the interview she renewed the offer of protection.

But Marjorie, after looking at the dreary room and its strange mistress gave a most decided negative.

'I'd better stay at home,' she said.

'Ye silly bairn, you cannot aye bide at the manse,' returned the lady; 'if the house is aye to be in the possession of that daft Solomon and you, where do you mean to put the new minister that's coming to Annandale?'

Marjorie did not answer. To tell the truth, this was a phase of the situation which had never once entered her mind. She had thought in a vague sort of way that she would remain at the manse, and that was all.

But now her eyes were opened. She knew that a new minister would be needed, and the manse was his proper home. Solomon, in all probability, would retain his place as sexton, but assuredly she would be compelled to go.

She remained with Miss Hetherington only a short time, and when she left the Castle her mind was so full of solicitude, that she walked along utterly oblivious to everything about her. Suddenly she started and uttered a glad cry of surprise. A man had touched her on the shoulder, and, lifting her eyes, she beheld her lover.

The Frenchman was dressed as she last had seen him, in plain black; his face was pale and troubled.

Marjorie, feeling that new sense of desolation upon her, drew near to his side.

'Ah, monsieur,' she said, 'you have come—at last.'

Caussidière did not embrace her, but held her hands, and patted them fondly, while Marjorie, feeling comforted by his very presence, allowed her tears to flow unrestrainedly. He let her cry for a time, then he placed her hand upon his arm, and walked with her slowly in the direction of the manse.

'My Marjorie,' he said, 'my own dear love! this has been a

sore trial to you, but you have borne it bravely. I have seen you suffer, and I have suffered too.'

'You have seen, monsieur?'

'Yes, Marjorie. Did you think because I was silent I had forgotten? Ah, no, my love. I have watched over you always, I have seen you go forth at night, and cry as if your little heart would break. But I have said nothing, because I thought "Such grief is sacred. I must watch and wait," and I have waited.'

'Yes, monsieur?'

'But to-day, Marjorie, when I saw you come from the Castle with your face all troubled—ah, so troubled, my Marjorie! I thought, "I can wait no longer, my little one needs me; she will tell me her grief, and now, in her hour of need I will help her." So I have come, Marjorie, and my little one will confide all her sorrows to me.'

Then the child in her helplessness clung to him; for he loved her and sympathised with her; and she told him the full extent of her own desolation.

The Frenchman listened attentively while she spoke. When she ceased he clasped her hands more fervently than before, and said:

'Marjorie, come to *my* home!'

She started, and drew her hands away. She knew what more he would say, and it seemed to her sacrilege when the clergyman had been so recently laid in his grave. The Frenchman, gathering from her face the state of her mind, continued prosaically enough:

'I know it is not a time to talk of love, Marjorie; but it is a time to talk of marriage! When you were in Edinburgh you gave me your promise; and you said you loved me. I ask you now, Fulfil your promise; let us become man and wife!'

'You wish me to marry you *now*, monsieur?'

'Ah, yes, Marjorie.'

'Although I am a penniless, friendless, homeless lass.'

'What is that to me, my dear? I love you, and I wish you to be my wife.'

'You are very good.'

'Marjorie?'

'Yes.'

'Tell me; when will you make me the happiest man alive?'

Marjorie looked at her black dress, and her eyes filled with tears.

'I do not know—I cannot tell,' she said. 'Not yet.'

'*Eh bien*!—but it must not be long delayed. The decrees of destiny hurry us onward. You will soon be thrust from the manse, as you say, while I must return to France.'

'You are going away.'

'Most assuredly I must soon go. My future is brightening before me, and I am glad—thank Heaven!—there are few dark clouds looming ahead to sadden our existence, my child. The tyrant who desecrates France will one day fall; meantime his advisers have persuaded him to pardon many political offenders, myself amongst them. So I shall see France again! God is good! When He restores me to my country, He will give me also my wife.'

He paused, and Marjorie was silent. Was it all real or only a dream! It seemed so strange that she, plain little Marjorie Annan, should marry a gentleman like Monsieur Caussidière and go away to lead a life of fairy-like happiness in France. Already the old, peaceful life by Annan Water seemed to be fading away, while that other life rising before her showed as yet no dark spot upon its shining face.

And yet Marjorie felt afraid; perhaps even then a faint feeling of what was before her made her shrink a little from entering that strange land unprotected and almost alone. Caussidière felt her hand tremble as it lay upon his arm; he looked at her, and he saw that her eyes were again full of tears.

'Marjorie,' he said, 'what is it?'

The girl hastily brushed away her tears, and choked down the sobs which were rising in her throat.

‘I don’t know,’ she said, ‘but I feel so sad. Oh, monsieur, if I go with you, I leave my home and every one who cares for me in the world.’

For a moment the Frenchman’s face was by no means pleasant to behold. He pulled his moustache, brought down his brows, and opened his lips to say something, when suddenly the impulse passed away, and he addressed her more lovingly than ever.

‘It is your kind heart, my child,’ he said, ‘which makes you say so much. Your home, what is it? A house which you will soon be turned from. Your friends, who are they? At the head of them stands Miss Hetherington, a selfish woman, who would sacrifice you to her own iron, headstrong temper, and, if you dared gainsay her, would have sufficient strength of will to see you starving in the streets without much pity. Then there is Solomon, the sexton, and Mysie, the servant at the manse. What would they do for you, Marjorie? while I, whom you fear, would willingly make you my wife, and give you a happy future.’

‘Ah, monsieur, I do not fear you, but——’

‘Then prove it, Marjorie; put your little hand in mine, and say “Léon, I trust you with all my heart.” Say it, my child, and believe me your faith shall not be misplaced.’

He held forth his hand to her, and Marjorie, tremblingly raising her eyes to his face, said in broken accents, ‘I *do* trust you.’

So a second time the troth was plighted, and, whether for good or ill, Marjorie’s fate was sealed.

Every day after this she met the Frenchman, and at each of these interviews his influence over her seemed to increase. Having got her thus far into his power, he easily persuaded her to keep their relations private, and to consent to a secret marriage. It certainly seemed strange to Marjorie that he should wish this, but after a little reflection she persuaded herself that after all he might be right. Now that the minister was gone,

where was the sympathetic soul in whom she could confide? There was absolutely no one. So Marjorie, having been drawn on and on, quite unconscious, poor child, of the meshes of the net which were being laid so cunningly about her, had already begun to recover from her first sharp sense of desolation.

The prospect of a secret marriage was the only thing that troubled her, and here her fears were soon lulled at rest. After all, what was there to daunt her? Caussidière had proposed nothing dishonourable; she loved him better than anyone she had met; so where was the harm in marrying him? Then again, he had held out hopes to her which made her heart very glad. She must go to France with him as his wife. He wished to show her his home, he said, and to make her known to all his dear relations. Then after a while she would come back again; he would bring her to Annandale to revisit her old home and her old friends. How proud they would all be of her, and they would then assuredly open their hearts to him, for he would show them how little he had deserved their coldness and mistrust!

Having got her thus far under his influence, Caussidière began to press on the marriage. His plan was clear. He would obtain a special license, armed with which he would disappear from Annandale to take up his abode for the necessary period in the place fixed upon by him for the marriage ceremony to take place.

At first Marjorie shrank from this as she had done from his other proposals; but after a while she consented. Caussidière, however, was by no means easy in his mind. Perceiving well enough that the maiden was acting more under his will than her own, he feared that, if left to herself, her courage at the last moment might fail her. He therefore generously volunteered to come back to Annandale to fetch her.

'I must take care of you *now*,' he said as they stood together near the manse gate. 'Marjorie, my darling,' he added, lifting

her face and kissing it—‘Marjorie, my little love, only a very few days now and you will be my wife,’

CHAPTER XIX.

A LITTLE CHEQUE.

THE day following her final promise to Caussidière, Marjorie received intimation that the new minister was coming without delay to take possession of the living. Her informant was Solomon Mucklebackit, whose funereal despair was tempered with a certain lofty scorn.

‘He’s frae the Hielan’s beyond Glasgow, and a callant scarce thirty years o’ age. Freeland they ca’ him, and he has a wife and a hoosefu’ o’ weans. That I should leeve to see a hen-peckit upstart preachin’ in our poopit, and a flock o’ red-headed Hielan’ bairns screechin’ in oor hoose! It’s enough to gar the meenister—God rest him!—rise in his grave!’

‘When will they come, Solomon?’ cried Marjorie, her eyes full of tears.

‘He’s coming himsel’ first, to preach next Sabbath, and he’s to hae the meenister’s ain bed in the manse. We’re here on sufferance noo, you ken, and directly the sale is owre——’

Marjorie turned away sobbing. The break-up of her household gods was nearly complete; for under Mr. Menteith’s instructions the few goods and chattels were already announced to be disposed of by public roup. As to the general state of Mr. Lorraine’s worldly affairs, Marjorie as yet knew nothing; but she had heard and seen quite enough to be aware that he died, as he had lived, a very poor man.

The next day, which was a Thursday, the Reverend Mr. Menteith arrived from Edinburgh, and summoned Marjorie to an interview in the little study. When she appeared, his gloomy

face was not unkindly, and he took her hand and kissed her on the forehead with almost paternal gentleness.

'I have had a letter from Mr. Freeland,' he exclaimed, 'and he wishes to take possession directly the sale is over. Have you thought again over Mistress Menteith's proposal that you should bide, for a time at least, as a member of our family?'

Yes, Marjorie had thought of it; but she begged, with many sobs and tears, to remain where she was.

'That, my child, is impossible,' responded Mr. Menteith. 'This place is no longer your home, and you are o'er young to dwell by yourself. There is a little money, about a hundred and twenty pounds, besides the produce of the sale, which will amount, say, to fifty more; and though Mr. Lorraine has left no will, Mistress Menteith and myself are agreed to lay out this sum for your benefit. Such a trifle, however, if placed out at interest, would scarcely keep you in porridge and milk, and if you lived upon the principal, it would be gone directly. If you will come to us, you will be welcome, and the money shall be your portion when you marry.'

The proposal was a kind one, and under other circumstances Marjorie would have accepted it with a grateful heart; but she remembered her promise to Caussidière, who seemed indeed the only real refuge in her desolation.

'Please give me time to think it over,' said Marjorie sadly. 'I can't realise it all yet, Mr. Menteith.' She added, almost as if to herself, 'Miss Hetherington has offered me a home as well as you.'

Mr. Menteith opened his eyes. Although a pious man, he was not without his reverence for the aristocracy of this world.

'At the Castle, Marjorie? To reside with her temporarily or as a guest?'

'As long as I like, Mr. Menteith. She has been kind to me ever since I was a bairn, and she would like me to live with her altogether.'

'Then of course you will go? Nay, don't think I shall

blame you for preferring Miss Hetherington's protection to the shelter of our humble home !'

But Marjorie shook her head.

'I would rather go to Edinburgh with *you* than stay *there*,' she answered. 'I cannot thole the dreary place ; and Miss Hetherington, though she is so kind, is very strange. Often, Mr. Menteith, I think she is not quite in her right mind. Whiles she is kind to me, and greets over me, and is very tender ; but whiles she changes, and scolds and storms, till I'm in dread to look her in the face. I am sure I could never bide up at the Castle.'

'Well, we shall see,' muttered Mr. Menteith, rather irritably ; and so the conversation ended.

On the following Saturday arrived the new minister, prepared to officiate for the first time in the parish. He was, as Solomon had predicted, a youngish man, with red hair and beard, and very pink complexion ; but his manners were unassuming and good-natured. His wife and family, he explained, were to follow him in about ten days ; and in the meantime his furniture and other chattels were coming on by train. Shown over the manse by Solomon, he expressed no little astonishment at finding only two or three rooms furnished, and these very barely.

'Mr. Lorraine never married?' he inquired as they passed from room to room.

'The meenister was a wise man,' replied Solomon ambiguously. 'He lived and he dee'd in single sanctity, according to the holy commandment o' the Apostle Paul.'

'Just so,' said Mr. Freeland with a smile. 'Well, I shall find the manse small enough for my belongings. Mistress Freeland has been used to a large house, and we shall need every room. The chamber facing the river, upstairs, will make an excellent nursery.'

'My ain bedroom?' muttered Solomon. 'Weel, weel, I'm better oot o' the house.'

At the service on the following day there was a large attend-

ance to welcome the new minister. Solomon occupied his usual place as precentor, and his face, as Mr. Freeland officiated above him, was a study in its expression of mingled scorn, humiliation, and despair. But the minister had a resonant voice, and a manner of thumping the cushion which carried conviction to the hearts of all unprejudiced observers. The general verdict upon him, when the service was over, was that he was the right man in the right place, and 'a grand preacher.'

The congregation slowly cleared away, while Marjorie, lingering behind, walked sadly to the grave of her old foster-father and stood looking upon it through fastly falling tears. So rapt was she in her own sorrow that she did not hear a footstep behind her, and not till Caussidière had come up and taken her by the hand was she aware of his presence.

'So the change has come at last, my Marjorie,' he said. 'Was I not right? This place is no longer a home for you.' 'Monsieur.'

'Call me Léon. Shall we not soon be man and wife?'

But Marjorie only sobbed.

'He was so good. He was my first, my only friend.'

'Peace be with him,' returned the Frenchman tenderly. 'He loved you dearly, *mignonne*, and I knew his only wish would be to see you happy. Look what I hold in my hand. A charm—a talisman—*parbleu*, it is like the wonderful lamp of Aladdin, which will carry us, as soon as you will, hundreds of miles away.'

As he spoke he drew forth a folded paper and smilingly held it before her.

'What is it, monsieur?' she asked, perplexed.

'No; you must call me Léon—then I will tell you.'

'What is it—Léon?'

'The special license, Marjorie, which permits us to marry when and where we will.'

Marjorie started and trembled, then she looked wildly at the grave.

'Not yet,' she murmured. 'Do not ask me yet?'

He glanced round—no one was near—so with a quick movement he drew her to him, and kissed her fondly on the lips.

'You have no home now,' he cried; 'strangers come to displace you, to turn you out into the cold world. But you have one who loves you a thousand times better for your sorrow and your poverty—ah, yes, I know you are poor!—and who will be your loving protector till the end.'

She looked at him in wonder. Ah, how good and kind he was. Knowing her miserable birth, seeing her friendless and almost castaway, he would still be beside her, to comfort and cherish her with his deep affection. If she had ever doubted his sincerity could she doubt *now*?

* * * * *

Half-an-hour later Caussidière was walking rapidly in the direction of Annandale Castle. He looked supremely self-satisfied and happy, and hummed a light French air as he went.

Arriving at the door he knocked, and the old serving-woman appeared in answer to the summons.

'Miss Hetherington, if you please.'

'You canna see her,' was the sharp reply. 'What's your beesiness?'

'Give her this card, if you please, and tell her I *must* see her without delay.'

After some hesitation the woman carried the card away, first shutting the door unceremoniously in the visitor's face. Presently the door opened again, and the woman beckoned him in.

He followed her along the gloomy lobbies, and upstairs, till they reached the desolate boudoir which he had entered on a former occasion.

The woman knocked.

'Come in,' said the voice of her mistress.

Caussidière entered the chamber, and found Miss Hetherington, wrapt in an old-fashioned morning gown, seated in an arm-chair at her escritoire. Parchments, loose papers, and

packets of old letters lay scattered before her. She wheeled her chair sharply round as he entered, and fixed her eyes upon the Frenchman's face. She looked inexpressibly wild and ghastly, but her features wore an expression of indomitable resolution.

Caussidière bowed politely, then, turning softly, closed the door.

'What brings you here?' demanded the lady of the Castle.

'I wished to see you, my lady,' he returned. 'First, let me trust that you are better, and apologise for having disturbed you on such a day.'

Miss Hetherington knitted her brows, and pointed with tremulous forefinger to a chair.

'Sit down,' she said.

Caussidière obeyed her, and sat down, hat in hand. There was a pause, broken at last by the lady's quick, querulous voice.

'Weel, speak! Have you lost your tongue, man? What's your will with *me*?'

Caussidière replied with extreme suavity:

'I am anxious, my lady, that all misunderstanding should cease between us. Much as you distrust me, I feel for you the greatest sympathy and respect—ah, yes!—and I wish we could be friends.'

'Friends?' echoed the lady incredulously.

'Why not? You are a lady of wealth and stainless reputation; I am a gentleman and a man of honour. I have accidentally become acquainted with circumstances which are unknown to the rest of the world; but, believe me, the knowledge is safe in my keeping, and you may rely on my discretion. Why, then, should you regard me with suspicion, and refuse the offer of my sympathy and my poor service?'

Curiously enough, even this conciliatory style of address had little or no effect upon the listener, who still kept her dark eyes fixed upon the speaker, and nodded her head grimly in time to his well-rounded periods.

'Gang on,' she said, as he paused smiling; 'you're not finished yet.'

'Not quite; and yet I have little to say that you have not heard before. The sad event which has just occurred has only confirmed me, madame, in my wish to win your confidence. To prove my sincerity I will give you a piece of news. I have asked Miss Annan to marry me, and with your consent she is quite willing.'

'What!' cried Miss Hetherington, half-rising from her chair, and then sinking back with a gasp and a moan. 'Have ye dared?'

Caussidière gently inclined his head.

'And Marjorie—*she* has dared to accept ye without warning me?'

'Pardon me, she is not aware that you have any *right* to be consulted. I, however, who acknowledge your right, have come in her name to solicit your kind approbation.'

'And what do you threaten, man, if I say "no, no"—a hundred times no?'

Caussidière shrugged his shoulders.

'*Parbleu*, I threaten nothing; I am a gentleman, as I have told you. But should you put obstacles in my way, it may be unpleasant for all concerned.'

Miss Hetherington rose to her feet, livid with rage, and shook her two extended hands in her tormentor's face.

'It's weel for you I'm no a man! If I were a man ye should never pass that door again living! I defy ye—I scorn ye! Ye coward, to come here and molest a sick woman!'

She tottered as she spoke, and fell back into her chair.

'You are very unjust, my lady,' answered the Frenchman. 'Believe me, I am your friend.'

She lay back moaning for some seconds; then, struck by a new thought, she looked up wearily.

'I see how it is! You want money?'

'I am not a rich man, madame,' answered Caussidière smiling.

'If I give you a hundred pounds will you leave this place, and never let me see your face again?'

Caussidière mused.

'One hundred pounds. It is not much.'

'Two hundred,' exclaimed the lady eagerly.

'Two hundred is better, but still not much. With two hundred pounds—and fifty—I might even deny myself the pleasure of your charming acquaintance.'

Miss Hetherington turned towards her desk, and reached her trembling hand towards her cheque-book, which lay there ready.

'If I give you two hundred and fifty pounds will you do as I bid ye? Leave this place for ever, and speak no word of what has passed to Marjorie Annan?'

'Yes,' said Caussidière, 'I think I can promise *that*.'

Quickly and nervously Miss Hetherington filled up a cheque.

'Please do not cross it,' suggested Caussidière. 'I will draw the money at your bankers in Dumfries.'

The lady tore off the cheque, but still hesitated.

'Can I trust ye?' she muttered. 'I knew it was siller ye sought, and not the lassie, but——'

'You may rely upon my promise that I shall return forthwith to France, where a great political career lies open before me.'

'Will you put it down in writing?'

'It is needless. I have given you my word. Besides, madame, it is better that such arrangements as these should not be written in black and white. Papers may fall into strange hands, as you are aware, and the result might be unfortunate—for *you*.'

She shuddered and groaned as he spoke, and forthwith handed him the cheque. He glanced at it, folded it up, and put it in his waistcoat-pocket. Then he rose to go.

'As I informed you before,' he said, 'you have nothing to fear from me. My only wish is to secure your good esteem.'

'When will you gang?' demanded Miss Hetherington.

'In the course of the next few days. I have some little arrangements, a few bills to settle, and then—*en route* for France.'

He bowed again, and gracefully retired. Passing downstairs and out at the front door, he again hummed gaily to himself. As he strolled down the avenue he drew forth the cheque and inspected it again.

‘Two hundred and fifty pounds!’ he said, laughing. ‘How good of her, how liberal, to pay our travelling expenses!’

Meantime, Miss Hetherington sat in her gloomy boudoir, looking the picture of misery and despair. Her eyes worked wildly, her lips trembled convulsively.

‘Oh Hugh, my brother Hugh!’ she cried, wringing her hands; ‘if you were living, to take this scoundrel by the throat! . . . Will he keep his word? Maybe I was mad to trust him! I must wait and wait till he’s awa’. I’ll send doon for the bairn this day! She’s safer here wi’ me!’

CHAPTER XX.

FLYING SOUTH.

IMMEDIATELY after his interview with Miss Hetherington, Caussidière disappeared from the neighbourhood for some days; a fact which caused Marjorie little or no concern, as she had her own suspicion as to the cause of his absence. Her heart was greatly troubled, for she could not shake off the sense of the deception she was practising on those most interested in her welfare. Again and again, in the privacy of her own chamber, she knelt and prayed for help and advice from the spirit of her dead foster-father. Ah, if he had only been alive to guide her! Bitterly now did she reproach herself that she had not told him everything and confided in his love and sympathy.

There was no one to take his place. Mr. Menteith was kind, but antipathetic; she dared not tell him the whole truth. As for Solomon, such confidences as she had with Mr. Lorraine were impossible with *him*. Since his master’s death he had

grown gloomier and more irritable than ever; and even her tender approaches to some affectionate understanding were disregarded or misunderstood. Poor Solomon was wandering like a haunted creature in the shadow of the grave.

Her only other friend was Miss Hetherington, and for *her* she still felt the old awe and timidity. She feared her violent bursts of temper and her general severity of disposition. No; there was no safe guide and comforter left, now the good old minister was gone.

While she was waiting and debating, she received a visit from the lady of the Castle, who drove down post haste, and stalked into the manse full of evident determination. Marjorie was sent for at once, and, coming downstairs, found Miss Hetherington and Mr. Menteith waiting for her in the study.

'It's all settled, Marjorie,' said the impulsive lady. 'You're to come home with me to the Castle this very day.'

Marjorie started in astonishment, but before she could make any reply, Mr. Menteith interposed.

'You cannot do better, my child, than accept Miss Hetherington's most generous invitation. The day after to-morrow, as you are aware, the sale will take place, and this will be no longer your home. Miss Hetherington is good enough to offer you a shelter until such time as we can decide about your future mode of life.'

'Just so,' said the lady decisively. 'Pack your things and come awa' with me in the carriage.'

'I cannot come,' replied Marjorie; 'at least, not to-day. Oh! Mr. Menteith, let me stop in the manse till they turn me out, and then——'

She paused, weeping and hiding her face in her hands.

'Marjorie, Marjorie,' murmured Miss Hetherington, not unkindly, 'when will ye learn sense, my bairn? It's useless greeting for the dead. The silly old man that's gone has taught you naething o' the ways o' the world.'

'Do not say a word against him!' cried Marjorie, with sudden

indignation, uncovering her face, while her eyes flashed through her tears. 'Oh! he was good and wise. I'll never hear him miscalled.'

'Hush, Marjorie!' interposed Mr. Menteith.

'Let the lassie speak her mind,' cried Miss Hetherington, 'it's better to flyte than to fret, and I'm glad she has a woman's spirit. But, Marjorie, I'm not miscalling him that's gone, for all the world kens that he was a decent, God-fearing man. All I want you to understand is that greeting will never bring him back, and that my house is your home when you like to come.'

'I know you are very kind,' returned Marjorie, 'and maybe you'll be thinking I'm ungrateful. Mr. Lorraine always said you were my best friend. But I cannot come with you to-day.'

'*When* will you come?' demanded the lady.

'Give me time, please,' pleaded Marjorie; 'in a day or two maybe—after the sale. I should like to stay till I can stay no more.'

So it was settled, to Marjorie's great relief; and Mr. Menteith led the great lady back to her carriage. As they crossed the garden Miss Hetherington said, leaning on the minister's arm:

'Watch her weel, if you please, till she comes to me, and if you see that foreign scoondrel in her company, let me ken.'

Mr. Menteith looked astonished, for he had neither heard nor seen anything of the Frenchman. In answer to his hurried queries, Miss Hetherington rapidly explained the state of affairs, saying nothing, of course, of her own relations with Caussidière. She seemed greatly relieved when the minister informed her that Marjorie spent the greater part of each day in her own room, only creeping out now and then to walk in the churchyard.

'Maybe the man has gone awa',' she muttered; 'maybe he is not so eager to woo a lassie without a tocher. But should you see him in the neighbourhood be sure to send to me.'

The minister promised, and the lady drove away.

At sunset that day as Marjorie left the manse and crossed over to the old churchyard she was accosted by John Sutherland,

who had been waiting at the gate some time in expectation of her appearance. She gave him her hand sadly, and they stood together talking in the road.

'They tell me you are going to stop at the Castle. Is that so, Marjorie?'

'I am not sure; maybe.'

'If you go, may I come to see you there? I shan't be long in Annandale. In a few weeks I am going back to London.' He paused, as if expecting her to make some remark, but she did not speak, and her thoughts seemed far away. 'Marjorie,' he continued, 'I wish I could say something to comfort you in your trouble, for though my heart is full I can hardly find my tongue. It seems as if all the old life was breaking up under our feet and carrying us far asunder. For the sake of old times we shall be friends still, shall we not?'

'Yes, Johnnie, of course,' was the reply. 'You've aye been very good to me.'

'Because I loved you, Marjorie. Ah, don't be angry—don't turn away—for I'm not going to presume again upon our old acquaintance. But, now that Death has come our way, and all the future seems clouding, I want to say just this—that come what may, I shall never change. I'm not asking you to care for me—I'm not begging you this time to give me what you've maybe given to another man; but I want you to be sure, whatever happens, that you've one faithful friend at least in the world, who would die to serve you, for the sake of what you were to him lang syne.'

The words were so gentle, the tone so low and tender, the manner of the man so full of melancholy sympathy and respect, that Marjorie was deeply touched.

'Oh, Johnnie,' she said, 'you know I have always loved you—always trusted you, as if you were my brother.'

'As your brother, then, let it be,' answered Sutherland sadly. 'I don't care what title it is, so long as it gives me the right to watch over you.'

To this Marjorie said nothing. She continued to walk quietly onward, and Sutherland kept by her side. Thus they passed together through the churchyard, and came to the spot where Mr. Lorraine was at rest. Here she fell upon her knees, and quietly kissed the grave.

Had Sutherland been less moved by his own grief he might have noticed something strange in the girl's manner, for she kissed the ground almost passionately, and murmured between her sobs, 'Good-bye, good-bye.'

She was recalled to herself by Sutherland's voice.

'Don't cry, Marjorie,' he said.

'Ah, I can't help it,' she sobbed. 'You are all so good to me—far better than I deserve.'

'Don't say that, Marjorie; you've always been a good lassie and a bonnie, and so you've won your way into all hearts. I'm not denying that I should have been better pleased if you could have looked more kindly on me; but it's no fault of yours, Marjorie. You are a good lassie, and though I know well enough you'll give to some other man the heart that I've been hungering for, I shall love you till my dying day.'

They left the churchyard together, and wandered back to the manse gate. When they paused again, Sutherland took her hand and kissed it.

'Good-bye, Johnnie.'

'No, not good-bye. I may come and see you again, Marjorie, mayn't I, before I go away?'

'Yes,' she returned, 'if—if you like.'

'And Marjorie, maybe the next time there'll be folk by, so that we cannot speak. I want you to promise me one thing before we part this night.'

'What do you wish?' said Marjorie, shrinking half fearfully away.

'Only this, that as you've given me a sister's love, you'll give me also a sister's trust. I want to think when I'm away in the great city that if you were in trouble you'd send right away to

me. Just think always, Marjorie, that I'm your brother, and be sure there isn't a thing in this world I wouldn't do for you.'

He paused, but Marjorie did not answer; she felt she could not speak. The unselfish devotion of the young man touched her more than any of his ardent love-making had done.

Perhaps she was thinking what a peaceful life hers might have been if she had been able to give him the love which he sought; but alas! we cannot command our affections, and possibly young Sutherland's love-suit might not have been more prosperous even if the Frenchman had never come to Annandale.

'Marjorie, *will* you promise me——'

'Promise what?'

'To send to me if you're in trouble; to let me be your brother indeed.'

She hesitated for a moment; then she gave him her hand.

'Yes, Johnnie, I promise,' she said. 'Good-bye.'

'No, good-night, Marjorie.'

'Good-night,' she repeated, as she left his side and entered the manse.

About ten o'clock that night, when all the inmates of the manse had retired to rest, and Marjorie was in her room about to prepare for bed, she was startled by hearing a sharp shrill whistle just beneath her window. She started, trembling, sat on the side of her bed and listened.

In a few minutes the sound was repeated. This time she ran to the window, opened it, and put out her head.

'Who is it?' she asked softly. 'Is anyone there?'

At the sound of her voice a figure advanced from the shadow of the wall, and a voice answered her.

'Yes, Marjorie. It is I, Léon; come down!'

Trembling more and more, Marjorie hurriedly closed the window, wrapped a shawl about her head and shoulders, and noiselessly descended the stairs. The next minute she was in the Frenchman's arms. He clasped her fervently to him. He kissed her again and again as he said:

'To-morrow night, Marjorie, you will come to me.'

The girl half shrank away as she said :

'So soon—ah, no !'

'It is not too soon for me, little one,' returned the Frenchman gallantly, 'for I love you—ah ! so much, Marjorie, and every hour seems to me a day. Listen, then. You will retire to bed to-morrow night in the usual way. When all the house is quiet, and everyone asleep, you will wrap yourself up in your travelling cloak and come down. You will find me waiting for you here. . . . Do you understand me, Marjorie ?'

'Yes, monsieur, I understand, but——'

'But what, my love ?'

'I was thinking of my things. How shall I get them away ?'

'*Parbleu*, there must be no luggage. You must leave it all behind, and bring nothing but your own sweet self.'

'But,' continued Marjorie, 'I must have some clothes, to change.'

'Most certainly ; you shall have just as many as you wish, my little love. But we will leave the old attire, as we leave the old life, behind us. I am not a poor man ; Marjorie, and when you are my wife all mine will be all yours also. You shall have as much money as you please to buy what you will. Only bring me your own sweet self, Marjorie—that will be enough.'

With such flattery as this the Frenchman dazzled her senses until long past midnight ; then after she had made many efforts to get away he allowed her to return to the house.

During that night Marjorie slept very little ; the next day she was pale and distraught. She wandered about the house in melancholy fashion ; she went up to the churchyard several times, and sat for hours beside her foster-father's grave. She even cast regretful looks towards Annandale Castle, and her eyes were constantly filled with tears.

At length it was all over. The day was spent, the whole

household had retired, and Marjorie sat in her room alone. Her head was ringing, her eyes burning, and her whole body trembling with mingled fear and grief—grief for the loss of those whom she must leave behind—fear for that unknown future into which she was about to plunge. She sat for a minute or so on the bed trying to collect her thoughts, then she wrote a few hurried lines, which she sealed and left on her dressing-table.

After that was done, she looked over her things, and collected together one or two trifles—little mementoes of the past, which had been given to her by those she held most dear, and which were doubly precious to her now that she was going away. She lingered so long and so lovingly over these treasures that she forgot to note how rapidly the time was flying on.

Suddenly she heard a whistle, and she knew that she was lingering over-long. Hurriedly concealing her one or two souvenirs she wrapped herself in her cloak, put on her hat and a very thick veil, descended the stairs, and found the Frenchman, who was waiting impatiently outside the gate. He said nothing, it was no time for talking, but he threw his arms around her and hurried her away.

Whither they went Marjorie scarcely knew, for in the excitement of the scene her senses almost left her. She was conscious only of being hurried along the dark road, then of being seated in a carriage by the Frenchman's side.

CHAPTER XXI

A REVELATION.

THE carriage drove on, proceeding rapidly in the direction of Dumfries. It had not gone far, however, before Marjorie uttered a wild cry and sprang trembling towards the door.

‘What is it, my love?’ cried Caussidière.

‘Stop the carriage! I cannot go away with you! Let me go back!’

Swift as thought, Caussidière encircled her waist, drew her down beside him on the seat, and kissed her fondly.

‘It is too late, my Marjorie! You have no home now but the home to which I take you. To-morrow you will be my little wife.’

‘They will never forgive me!’ she pleaded. ‘It is so wicked, so unkind, to leave them like this.’

The Frenchman laughed.

‘Are you not your own mistress? Have you not a right to choose your own husband? Ah, yes! And after all, who is there *now* who cares for you as I who love you? No one in the wide world. In a little while, Marjorie, we shall return together, and then, believe me, they will say that you have done well.’

Dazed and stupefied Marjorie yielded. She knew at last that she had taken the one great step on the path which leads to happiness or misery, and from which there is no retreating. Sadly as her heart misgave her, it was too late for regret. Sobbing passionately, she clung to her lover, and appealed to his good faith and his affection. He soothed her, and reassured her, till she lay weak, helpless, and trusting with her head upon his shoulder.

Through the darkness of the night they fled onward to Dumfries. As they reached the suburbs of the little town midnight was sounded from one of the church towers. The carriage left the highway, and rumbled on the causeway of the streets. About a quarter of an hour later it drew up in front of the railway station.

All was very quiet and gloomy. The only human being visible was a solitary railway porter.

Caussidière leaped out.

‘At what hour passes the express for the south?’ he demanded.

‘At half-past twelve, sir. You’ve ten or twelve minutes.’

Marjorie drew the hood of her cloak closely round her face, and, taking her lover’s hands, descended from the carriage and

stood, shivering and trembling, on the pavement. Caussidière paid the fly-driver, and, ordering the porter to follow with the luggage, drew Marjorie's hand upon his arm and strolled into the station.

On reaching the platform Marjorie cast a frightened look around, dreading to behold some familiar face ; but, beyond a couple of half-tipsy commercial travellers and a cattle-driver *en route* for the south, no one was visible.

A little later the two were seated alone in a first-class carriage, and rapidly whirling southward.

Caussidière was gay and exultant, and looked at his companion with inexpressible delight. All his plans had succeeded perfectly, and he was complete master of the situation. Thanks to Miss Hetherington also, he could afford to travel *en grand seigneur*. The fly-driver and the railway porter had received proofs of his liberality, and he had 'tipped' the guard.

'Are you happy now, my Marjorie?' he cried, embracing her.

Marjorie smiled faintly, and answered, with a hysterical sob, that she was very happy ; but her heart still felt like lead, and she would have given the world to undo what she had done.

The train ran right through to Carlisle, where they alighted. Hailing a fly they were driven to an inn, already familiar to Caussidière, in an obscure part of the town. They were evidently expected, and the hostess had prepared separate rooms.

After a slight supper, of which Marjorie scarcely partook, but which the Frenchman made festive with a bottle of very bad champagne, they parted for the night.

'Good night, my darling!' said Caussidière fondly. 'Tomorrow, early, I shall be the happiest man in all the world.'

Nothing could be kinder or more respectful than his manner, yet poor Marjorie retired with a heavy heart, and it was not for some hours afterwards that she cried herself to sleep.

* * * * *

The day following Marjorie's departure there was commotion at the manse. At early morning her absence had been dis-

covered, and to make assurance doubly sure the following note had been found lying open on her dressing-table :

‘DEAR MR. MENTEITH,

‘When you receive this I shall be far away. I have gone with one who loves me very much, and in a few hours we shall be married. Pray, pray, do not think me wicked or ungrateful ; but I was afraid to tell you how much I loved him, for fear you should be angry at my choice. He has promised to bring me back in a little time to ask forgiveness of all my friends. Tell Solomon, with my fond love, how weary I shall be till I see him again ; he was always so good to me, and I shall never, never forget him. Tell Miss Hetherington too ; I never had a kinder friend, but she must not blame me for following the wish of my heart. God bless you all ! Your loving

‘MARJORIE ANNAN.’

That was the letter, and Mr. Menteith read it aloud in utter amazement. It would be false to say that he exhibited any more violent emotion, for he had merely a friendly interest in the girl, and felt for her no overmastering affection. But Solomon Mucklebackit, after listening thunderstruck, uttered a wild cry, and struck his forehead with his clenched hand.

‘I kenned it, I foresaw it ! It’s the Frenchman, *dawm* him !’

‘Hush,’ said the minister. ‘No profanity, my man.’

‘*Dawm* him, *dawm* him !’ repeated the sexton, trembling with passion. ‘He has stolen oor Marjorie awa’ ! I saw the deil’s mark on his face when he first came creeping ben oor house and fell sleeping in oor kirk. *Dawm* him, I say—noo and for evermair !’

Then Mr. Menteith remembered the warning he had received from Miss Hetherington. Not without difficulty he elicited from Solomon, who was almost distraught, the whole story of Caussidière’s acquaintance with Marjorie, and subsequent visits to the manse.

'After all,' said Mr. Monteith, reflectively, 'he is a gentleman, and as they are going to be married——'

'Married!' ejaculated Solomon. 'Marry an awtheist—marry the deil! But he'll ne'er marry her. He'll betray her and heartbreak her, and cast her awa'.'

In the limits of a small Scotch village, news of any kind soon spreads, and before mid-day Marjorie's elopement was being discussed everywhere. Presently John Sutherland appeared at the manse looking pale as death. On questioning Mr. Monteith he soon learned the whole state of affairs.

'I understand it all,' he cried. 'Late last night as I was standing at our door I saw a carriage go by at full speed, and I caught a glimpse of a man's face looking from the window in the light of the lamp. I thought I recognised him; now I am sure it was the Frenchman.'

'Dawm him for evermair,' repeated, Solomon, regardless of Mr. Monteith's rebuke.

'And she has gone! gone of her own free will?'

Mr. Monteith handed him Marjorie's letter. He read it, and his eyes filled with tears.

'May God deal with him as he deals with *her*!' he groaned.

'Does Miss Hetherington know what has happened?'

'Not yet,' replied Mr. Monteith.

'I will go to her at once,' cried Sutherland. 'It is right that she should know. Perhaps she can advise us what to do.'

Without further parley he hastened off, running at full speed in the direction of the Castle, and taking a short cut familiar to him across the fields. Only the man who remembers his first love, and how it ended in despair and sorrow, can guess what Sutherland felt; but despite his hopeless sense of misery, he had a vague, dim idea that some kind of action would have to be taken.

Breathless and wild, he arrived at the Castle door. Directly he had summoned the serving-woman, he discovered that the news had arrived before him.

'She's a wild creature,' said the servant, 'I'm in dread to face her, and she's ordered oot the carriage, and will drive awa' at once. If ye *must* see her gang in yersel'; I daurna announce your coming!'

Sutherland stepped into the hall.

'Wheesht!' whispered the woman, 'I hear her coming doon the stair.'

Scarcely had she spoken when Miss Hetherington, cloaked and bonneted, appeared at the further end of the hall. She approached feebly, leaning on her staff; and as Sutherland hastened to meet her he saw that her face was like that of a corpse, her hair dishevelled and wild, her whole frame trembling with unusual excitement.

'Is it true?' she cried, gripping Sutherland's arm.

'Yes, Miss Hetherington.'

'Marjorie Annan has left the manse?'

'Yes, last night.'

'And in that scoondrel's company?'

'I believe so; but in her letter she mentions no name.'

'Her letter? What letter?'

Sutherland thereupon told her of the lines Marjorie had left for Mr. Menteith. She listened trembling; then seizing the young man's arm again, she drew him into the drawing-room, and closed the door.

'Let me think, let me think!' she cried, sinking into a chair, and covering her face with her hand. When she looked up, her eyes were full of tears.

'She's a lost lassie! And I might have saved her, had I known! O Marjorie, Marjorie! My brother's curse has come home to us both at last!'

Sutherland looked at her in utter astonishment. He had expected to find her angry and indignant, but her manner as well as her words were beyond measure extraordinary. Before he could speak again, she rose to her feet, and said between her firmly set lips:

'Johnnie Sutherland, listen to me! Have you the heart of a man?'

'What do you mean?'

'While you stand glowering there she's rushing awa' to her ruin! Will you gang after her, and in that villain's very teeth bring her back?'

'I don't even know where she has gone,' replied Sutherland; 'and besides, she has fled of her own will, and I have no right——'

Miss Hetherington interrupted him impatiently, almost fiercely.

'You have this right, that you loved her yoursel'. Ay, I ken all that! Find her, save her from that man, and I swear before God you shall marry her, Johnnie Sutherland!'

But the young man shook his head, looking the picture of despair.

'It is too late,' he said; 'and after all, he is her choice!'

'What right has she to choose?' cried Miss Hetherington. 'She cannot, she dare not, against my wish and will. I tell you he has beguiled her, and spirited her awa'. If you were half a man you'd be after them ere this—you'd hunt them down.'

'But what could I do?' exclaimed Sutherland, in utter consternation.

'Do!' cried the lady of the Castle, almost screaming. 'Kill the scoundrel—kill him! . . . Oh, if I had my fingers at his throat, I'd strangle him, old as I am!'

Overpowered with her emotion, she sank again into a chair. Full of amazement and sympathy, Sutherland bent over and endeavoured to calm her. As he did so she began moaning and sobbing as if heart-broken. Then suddenly, with eyes streaming and lips quivering, she looked pathetically up in his face:

'The blame is all mine!' she sobbed. 'God has punished me, Johnnie Sutherland. I should have defied the scandal o' the world, and taken her to my heart langayne. . . . I'm a sinful woman, and—Marjorie Anuan is my child!'

CHAPTER XXII.

WEDDING BELLS.

WHEN at length Marjorie fell to sleep in the inn at Carlisle, she slept soundly, and was only awakened from troubled dreams by a loud knocking at her bedroom door.

For a moment she thought she was in the manse. She leapt from her bed and opened the door, expecting to admit Mysie, but she was confronted by a smart chambermaid, who brought her hot water and her boots, and said, with a respectful courtesy:

‘The gentleman wishes to know, if you please, miss, what you would like to have for breakfast.’

The first sight of the girl had brought back to Marjorie the memory of all that had passed, and she turned away with a sigh.

‘Nothing,’ she said, ‘that is, anything—whatever he wishes, I’m not caring.’

With another courtesy the girl retired, and Marjorie having locked the door, threw herself on the bed and cried bitterly. What was she crying for? She hardly knew—she had come there of her own free will; it was too late for repentance; she was as much in the Frenchman’s power as if she had already been made his wife.

She dressed herself quickly; when she was ready, she stood before the mirror for a moment, and was shocked at the sight of her face. How pale and sad she looked for an expectant bride! She tried to look brighter, to think of pleasant things; but it was useless: that weary, harassed look would come into her eyes and remain there.

While she was still before the mirror the maid returned, announced that the breakfast was ready, and offered to conduct Marjorie to the gentleman, who was awaiting her below. Trembling very much, Marjorie followed the girl downstairs.

Caussidière had taken a private room. When he saw Marjorie's face he congratulated himself on his foresight; but although he noted her pale cheek and sad eyes, he gave no indication of it in his manner.

He came forward to meet her, with both his hands outstretched. He took her in his arms and kissed her, then he sat beside her at the table and tried to make her eat.

'My little wife must not get ill,' he said; 'she must think of her bright future, not of her sad past. A few months, only a very few months, my Marjorie, and you shall come back again. In the meantime you must let me take a pretty and a happy bride to France.'

Under his reassuring influence Marjorie's sadness partly wore away; and a little later, when she found herself walking in the fields by his side, she almost imagined she was transported to those early days when he first came to Annandale.

It was such a morning as would make anyone feel glad; the whole heavens and earth seemed to be smiling upon her—the sun was shining brightly from above, and birds were singing in the air all round.

'A pleasant omen,' said Caussidière, gazing smilingly about him, and patting Marjorie's hand as it lay upon his arm. 'Marjorie, *ma belle*, if the old superstition comes true, yours should be a happy bridal.'

'Ah, but I am not a bride yet,' answered Marjorie quietly.

'Not yet,' answered Caussidière, 'but it's almost the same thing, little one. Nothing could part us now, Marjorie.'

The Frenchman took her in his arms, and pressed her almost roughly, and then hurried on as if eager to bring that strange business to an end.

It was certainly a primitive wedding. The two walked together through the fields until they came to a quaint old church standing alone on a lonely suburban road. When they entered it was quite empty, and Caussidière, grown very serious now, looked at his watch and walked restlessly about. Marjorie

entered one of the pews, and falling on her knees, prayed silently.

How long she remained there she did not know ; a hand laid gently upon her shoulder recalled her to herself, and looking up, she saw her lover.

‘Come, Marjorie,’ he said ; ‘come, my love.’

She rose from her knees ; he put his arms about her and led her away.

What followed seemed like a dream. She was only dimly conscious of walking up the broad aisle, and taking her place before the altar rails. She saw, as in a mist, the clergyman in his white robes, and a man and a woman who were complete strangers. She was conscious of the service being read, of giving her responses, of her hand being clasped, and of a ring being put upon her finger. Then she was led away again ; she was in a strange room, she signed her name, and, as she laid down the pen, Caussidière clasped her in his arms and kissed her.

‘My wife,’ he said.

Yes, it was all over ; the past was done with, the future begun. Marjorie Annan had been by that simple ceremony transformed into ‘Marjorie Caussidière.’

The ceremony over, the husband and wife returned to the inn.

Marjorie was astonished to find an elaborate luncheon laid out in their private room. Caussidière, who seemed to have a weight lifted from his heart, made her sip the champagne which he poured for her with his own hand ; he saw the roses return to her cheeks, the light of happiness in her eyes ; and when a few moments later the landlady came up to drink the health of the strangely wedded pair, Marjorie looked bright and happy as a bride should do.

Shortly after luncheon they again left the inn, Caussidière feeing all the servants royally, and Marjorie smiling well pleased, as one and all, taken by her gentle manners and pretty face,

murmured their congratulations and wished the young bride a long and happy life.

Then she entered the carriage which was awaiting her, and drove away by her husband's side to the railway station.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE PURSUIT.

THE revelation of the true relationship between the minister's ward and the proud lady of the Castle fairly stupefied John Sutherland, it was so utterly overwhelming and unexpected.

Unusually simple-minded, and very ignorant of the world, he had been accustomed to regard Miss Hetherington as a being far removed, both by birth and education, above ordinary weaknesses, peccadilloes, and temptations; a sort of moral granite, with none of the softness and frangibility of commoner materials; a lady, in a word, without spot or flaw, and famous for her severity towards evildoers, especially those of her own sex. Yes, it was indeed a thunderclap! And to hear the confession from her own lips, to see the world-worn face gazing at him in mingled fierceness and humiliation, while the feeble frame shook like a storm-beaten tree, seemed most terrible of all.

No wonder Sutherland went ghastly pale, and could not at first articulate a word.

There was a long pause, filled only with the low monotonous wail of the miserable woman. At last Sutherland found his tongue, though to little purpose.

'Oh, Miss Hetherington, what is this you are telling me? I cannot believe it! Marjorie your daughter! Surely, surely you cannot mean what you say?'

'It is God's truth, Johnnie Sutherland,' replied the lady gradually recovering her composure. 'I thought to bear the secret with me to my grave, but it's out at last. Grief and despair

wrenched it out o' me ere I knew what I was saying. Gang your ways,' she added bitterly, 'and spread it like the town-crier. Let all the world ken that the line o' the Hetheringtons ends as it began, in a black bar sinister and a nameless shame.'

'Do not say that!' cried Sutherland. 'What you have said is sacred between you and me, I assure you! But Marjorie . . . Did *she* know what you have told to me?'

Miss Hetherington shook her head.

'She had neither knowledge nor suspicion. Even Mr. Lorraine knew nothing, though whiles I fancied that he made a guess. Only one living man besides yoursel' ever found out the truth, and maybe ere this Marjorie has learned it frae *him*. God help me! she'll learn to hate and despise me when he tells her all.'

'You mean the Frenchman?' said Sutherland. 'How is it that he——'

'Curse him for a black-hearted devil!' said Miss Hetherington, with an access of her old fury. 'He came here like a spy when I was awa', and he searched amang my papers, and he found in my desk a writing I should have burnt langsyne. Then he threatened, and fool-like I gave him money to quit the place. He *has* quitted it, but with *her* in his company, wae's me!'

And she wrung her hands in despair. Then quick as thought her mood changed, and she rose trembling to her feet.

'But there's no time to be lost. While we stand blethering and glowering he's bearing her awa'. Johnnie Sutherland, let me look in your face! Once again have ye the heart of a man?'

Suiting the action to the word, she gazed at him as if to read his very soul.

'Folk think ye o'er gentle,' she continued, 'but I've aye liked you because I was sure ye had a stubborn will when your conscience told you that the right was on your side. If that man has wronged Marjorie Annan would you be feared to face him and avenge her?'

‘If he has played the villain,’ answered Sutherland, deathly pale, but determined, ‘I would hunt him down and punish him, though I had to follow him round and round the world.’

As the young man spoke his face wore an expression which few had ever noticed there before; all the softness and sweetness disappeared, the lines deepened, the eyes hardened, and the entire aspect grew hard as granite and as unrelenting.

‘I was right,’ cried the old lady, noticing the change. ‘Ye have the Hetherington temper, Johnnie Sutherland. Oh, that I were a man, to gang in your place! but you shall follow them with the swiftness of youth and the keenness o’ injured love.’

A few minutes later, Sutherland left the Castle, fully authorised to bring Marjorie back if possible, and armed with ample means, in the shape of a large sum of money, which Miss Hetherington thrust upon him.

Left to herself in the lonely Castle, the lady retired to her private suite of apartments, and there gave way to the wild tempest of her sorrow and despair. Pride and self-reproach contended together for the mastery of her heart; but love was there too—the intense love of maternity, which, for nearly eighteen years had been flickering secretly like a feeble fire.

Sitting in her armchair, her head lying back and her eyes fixed wildly on the window’s glimmering square and the dreary prospect beyond, she fell into a troubled dream of the past.

Again she was a proud, passionate girl, reckless in her comings and goings, caring for nothing in the world but the smiles of one man, and fearing nothing but the anger of her savage brother, in whom the tigerish blood of the male Hetheringtons ran twice fiercer through lust and wine.

So haughty and unlovable had she seemed, so stubborn and capricious, that only one man had dared to woo her—that man her father’s and her brother’s enemy, the enemy of all her house. They had met in secret, and she, with characteristic stubbornness, had loved him better for the feud that might have kept them asunder. And at last in a wild moment of impulse she

had placed herself at his mercy, and had loved him without God's blessing or the sanction of clergyman or priest.

She remembered it all, the daily sense of danger, the secret meetings, the passionate protestations, all the terrors and ecstasy of a forbidden love. He had sworn to marry her, to make her mistress of a house far greater than her own, but had ever delayed, still pleading the ill-blood between the two families. Nor had she dared to press him too eagerly, dreading as she did the wrath of her own people.

Then, to the terror and amaze of both, came the knowledge that she was about to become a mother !

Not till she confessed her situation to him did she discover that the hate of her family was justified, and that she had loved a villain ; for almost simultaneously came the news that he was about to marry the daughter of an English Earl. She taxed him with it ; he scarcely took the trouble to deny it. He could never, he said, unite himself with one of her house.

How it came about she scarcely knew : but one night, when she met her lover and faced him with wild upbraidings, a hand like iron was laid upon her arm, and, turning, she saw her brother Hugh. The two men faced each other ; there were a few words, then a blow, and she saw her lover's face livid and bleeding as she swooned away.

Later that night, when Hugh Hetherington sought her in that very chamber where she was now sitting, he had wrung the whole truth from her, and, hearing it, had struck *her* too with his clenched fist in the face.

As she thought of that time, she rose feebly and looked into the glass. Yes, the mark was there yet ; she would carry it to her grave.

Her worn face went ghastlier yet as she remembered what had followed. How her wild brother left the place and was absent for many days ; and how, just after he returned and drove her forth, she read in a newspaper that Lord Lochmaben, of the great Lochmabens of the Border, had just died suddenly in his

thirty-fifth year somewhere abroad. There was no scandal; the world did not even know how Lochmaben perished; but *she* knew that he had fallen by the hand of Hugh Hetherington in a duel fought with swords on foreign soil.

Ah, the darkness, the horror, the desolation of the next few months! No one but her brother knew her secret, and he kept it well, so that all the world heard was that the brother and sister had quarrelled, and that she had left the Castle to dwell, temporarily at least, apart. No one wondered. The Hetherington temper was well known, a by-word; it was as natural that such a brother and sister should hate each other as that swords should clash or fire and torrent disagree.

Creeping in secret to a town upon the English border, she had hidden her shame among the poorest of the poor. No one knew her; no one suspected but that she was some lowly woman who had gone astray in a manner only too common among her class. Then at last her little one was born.

Sitting and reviewing it all darkly, seeing memory's phantom images flashing and fading before her, like colours ever changing in a kaleidoscope, Miss Hetherington felt again that wild, murderous thrill which hunted creatures, animal and human, often feel, and which tempts them—despairingly, deliriously—to destroy their young. She shuddered and cowered, remembering her first impulse. But the child had lived; and one night, holding it to her heart, the mother had disappeared from the strange town as mysteriously as she had come, leaving no trace or clue.

Fascinated and afraid, she had returned to Annandale, hiding herself by day, travelling in the darkness only. How dark it had been, how the wind had roared, that night when she flitted like a ghost round the manse, and saw the gentle old pastor counting his souvenirs within! Her intention had been to go right on to the Castle with her burthen; but the sight of the good man decided her, and she acted as the reader knows—leaving the infant on the doorstep, and flitting silently away.

That night the brother and sister stood face to face. What was said and done no one knew ; but after a stormy scene the lady remained at the Castle. No one dreamed of connecting her with the waif just discovered at the manse door, for no one but her brother knew the secret of her fall ; and, as if by a special Providence, the corpse of a woman was washed up some days later on the Solway sands, and suspicion pointed to this woman as the mother of the little castaway.

From that time forth, till the day (which came soon) when her brother died, Miss Hetherington had little or no communion with him ; and when he passed away, as wildly and darkly as he had lived, she shed no tears. She had never forgiven him, would never forgive him this side the grave, for slaying the only man she had ever loved, and who might perhaps have made amends. She brooded over her wrongs till she grew prematurely old, and dwelt in the lonely house, of which she was now sole mistress, like a ghost in a sepulchre, from dismal day to day.

One comfort remained to her—one great comfort and mysterious joy. With no stain on her proud name, with no scandalous mouth to breathe her secret, she still preserved her child—so near to her that she could watch over her from year to year with gloomy yet tender love. Again and again she yearned to take the little girl to her arms and avow her motherhood ; but she shrank from the shame, and perhaps, if no fatality had prevented her, she might have carried the secret to her grave.

And now, when her child seemed lost to her, she wildly reproached herself for not having told her the sad truth long ago. Marjorie would have kept her secret ; of that she was sure ; and doubtless, being of loving disposition, would have rewarded her confidence with tender love, shrinking from her no longer, comforting her and pitying her as a gentle daughter should. Ah, yes ! her curse had come home, as she had said.

Her dislike to Caussidière had dated almost from their first

meeting. It was an instinct, a prepossession, for which she could hardly account; and like all her feelings, it was resolute and unchangeable. But when the man, with what seemed diabolic ingenuity, fathomed her long-buried secret, and confronted her with the discovery of her shame, the first dislike deepened into over-mastering hate and fear. And now, by a flank movement, he had utterly defeated and cheated her. Well it was for Caussidière that she was not a man, but a feeble, helpless woman. Even in the feebleness and helplessness of her womanhood she might get her fingers around his throat yet, and then—woe to him!

* * * * *

John Sutherland lost no time in the pursuit.

He hastened to Dumfries at once, and, by questioning the railway officials, soon discovered that the fugitives had gone southward by the mail the previous night. Further inquiry showed that only two first-class passengers had been booked by that train, taking their tickets to Carlisle, and that the person who took the tickets was a gentleman speaking with a strong foreign accent.

At five o'clock he left Dumfries, and before nightfall he was standing on the platform at Carlisle.

Here he was at fault, for Carlisle is a busy central station, where many passengers come and go nightly. He discovered at last, however, from one of the porters, that two persons answering to his description had arrived the previous night and driven away in a hired fly. His next task was to cross-examine all the fly-drivers who had been on duty the previous night; and at last, to his delight, he discovered the one in whose vehicle the fugitives had been driven away.

Leaping into the fly, he ordered the man to drive him to the hotel where Caussidière and Marjorie had slept—an obscure inn, as has been explained, in a quiet part of the town.

Dismissing the fly, he surveyed the place. It was an old-fashioned inn, with a sign swinging before the door. With

anxious heart he entered and turned aside into the bar-parlour, where he sat down and ordered something to drink. He was waited on by the landlady herself, a buxom, middle-aged woman, not disinclined to conversation.

‘Can I have a bed here to-night?’ he asked.

‘And welcome,’ replied the woman. ‘From the north by your tongue?’

Sutherland nodded.

‘You are very quiet, I suppose, at this time of year? Not many guests, I mean?’

‘Nay, indeed; but we don’t lay ourselves out for fine company. Ours is a quiet house, d’ye see?’

‘I think some friends of mine stayed here last night?’ proceeded Sutherland, with beating heart. ‘I was going to ask you if they are here still.’

‘Friends o’ yours. Not the French gentleman and the young lady?’

‘Yes,’ answered Sutherland, trembling violently.

‘A fine gentleman, and liberal-handed. ’Tis not the first time he has honoured this house, and had the best rooms. Did you want to see him?’

‘Yes. I have come for that purpose.’

‘Then you’re too late, master. They went away by the one o’clock train, directly the wedding was over.’

The wedding! Sutherland started as if shot through the heart.

The woman saw him change colour, and began with feminine shrewdness to guess the cause.

‘Maybe you’re a friend of the young lady? Pretty dear, she seemed to be in trouble. It was a runaway match, no doubt.’

Sutherland rose to his feet, trembling like a leaf.

‘By the one o’clock train, did you say?’ he murmured. ‘The train to the south?’

‘Yes, to London. Oh, master, is there anything wrong?’

‘Yes!—no!—I came too late, that is all. Good night!’

And he staggered, rather than walked, to the door.

'Then you don't want a bed?' asked the woman following him.

Without answering her, he passed out into the street, and walked away, he scarcely knew whither.

It was all over then; he had lost Marjorie for ever. Of what avail was it now to follow and attempt to save her? She had made her choice, and the result was no business of his. In the dark rush of his disappointment, he almost regretted that Caussidière had, so far, behaved like a man of honour. How could he interfere now? Where was his right of action? The man was her husband, and, though he had behaved in other respects like a scoundrel, he had placed himself beyond the reach of wrath or the necessity of explanation.

Dazed and despairing, he found his way back to the railway station. He found the telegraph office still open, and at once despatched a telegram to Dumfries, paying for a special message to take it on to Annandale Castle.

The message was as follows:

'They were married here this morning, and are gone south together. What am I to do?'

Knowing that it was impossible to receive a reply before morning, he entered the railway hotel and engaged a bedroom there. He neither undressed nor slept that night, but paced up and down the chamber, only now and then flinging himself on the bed and giving way to tears of despair.

It was a night of utter misery. The light and joy of the man's young life seemed extinguished for ever, for he had loved Marjorie with all the quiet passion of his soul.

Early the next morning he stood at the telegraph office, looking haggard and ghastly beyond measure, and asked for the answer to his message. It was handed to him, and he read these words:

'Do not come back. Follow her; hear the truth from her own lips. Spare no expense, but find her. I leave it all to you.'

It seemed a useless errand, but he was in no mood to argue or disobey. So he took the first train that was going southward, and before mid-day was far on his way to London.

CHAPTER XXIV.

PAGE TO PAGE.

It was not until the train reached London and Sutherland stood upon the platform at Euston Square that he felt the utter helplessness of his position.

When he had entered the train at Carlisle, he had simply been actuated with a wild wish to carry out Miss Hetherington's commands—to find Marjorie, and whether she were maid, wife, or widow, to bring her again to her home. The eager desire still inspired him, but common-sense now stepped in, and he asked himself as he stood on the platform in the waning light of day whether it would not be better for him to return to Annandale and remind the broken-hearted old lady that her daughter was now legally bound to remain with the man who had stolen her from her home.

Decidedly it would have been the best plan, but Sutherland could not adopt it. Added to his desire to please Miss Hetherington was an eager impulse of his own to see once again the girl whom he had loved, 'not wisely, but too well'; to tell her of the revelation which had been made to him; to beg of her, wife or no wife, to return with him to Annandale; and to receive for the first, perhaps for the last time, in her life, a mother's kiss and blessing.

He hailed a hansom, drove off to a hotel, and during the evening set himself to review his position very carefully and to map out the best course for him to pursue. It was not an easy matter to decide, for it seemed to him he could do absolutely nothing.

Without a single clue as to her whereabouts, he was to look for Marjorie in London—as well look for her in Europe, he thought; still after all, he argued, greater difficulties than that had often been surmounted, and he had plenty of courage to go on.

He sat down and wrote a little note to Miss Hetherington. He told her in detail of his discovery of Marjorie's marriage, of his journey to London, and of his hopes of finding her, and of inducing her to return to Annandale, if only for a little while.

As he could do literally nothing that night except ascertain that Marjorie was not indeed under the same roof with him, he retired early. The next morning, according to his country custom, he rose betimes, and was out in the street before the city had shaken off its last trace of repose.

He had laid his plans the night before, and he followed them religiously. He had got in his pocket a long list of all the hotels, and, following it *seriatim*, he called at each hotel, made minute inquiries as to the inhabitants, and examined the visitor's book.

When the day was done he had learned nothing, and he was a little out of heart.

The next morning, however, he felt more hopeful again; a good night's rest had refreshed his body, and consequently his mind was less morbid. He started off with his list in his pocket, but he determined to pursue his inquiries single-handed no longer. Before going to the hotels he proceeded to Scotland Yard, and enlisted the services of two detectives. These gentlemen spoke so hopefully of the case and promised so faithfully to find the fugitives, that Sutherland, whose experience of private detectives was very limited indeed, felt that the thing was as good as done.

Although that day his inquiries met with no better success than they had done on the day before, he felt considerably more hopeful at night. He wrote quite cheerfully to Miss Hetherington, said that all was going well, and that in a very

few days he hoped to return to Annandale, bringing her daughter with him.

But, alas! days passed, and as each one came on, it found Sutherland more and more disconsolate, more and more despairing as to his chance of ultimate success. The detectives came to him every day and brought their reports, which were not worth the paper they were written upon; they took his money, however, and what with this demand and his own expenses, he found the fund supplied to him by Miss Hetherington grow wofully less. Yet he had done absolutely nothing.

At length, though very reluctantly, Sutherland owned that fate in this particular matter had overmastered him; probably Marjorie had left London for France; at any rate he decided that further search would be useless; so he paid off his detectives and made up his mind to return to Annandale.

He had made his last visit to Scotland Yard, and was returning to his hotel to pack up his things for the night-train to Scotland, when a curious circumstance happened. Accident revealed to him what a search of months might never have done.

He was walking along moodily with his eyes on the ground; he had passed into the neighbourhood of Leicester Square, when suddenly he started and trembled from head to foot. A voice, it seemed to him a familiar voice, struck upon his ear; it was speaking volubly in the French tongue.

Hurriedly he drew aside to allow the person to pass him by; then looking up he recognised the French teacher—Caussidière.

‘Yes, it was certainly he, beyond all manner of doubt! He was carrying on such an excited conversation with his companion that he had not even noticed Sutherland, whose sleeve he had almost brushed.

Sutherland’s first impulse was to rush forward and confront the Frenchman; his next to drop back; to remain unobserved behind and to follow him.

The latter course he followed.

Where he went he could not tell, being unversed in the ways and the by-ways of the great city, but he was taken in and out of by-streets and slums—mostly inhabited by French refugees; presently the two men entered a house, from which, after a lapse of half an hour, which to Sutherland seemed an eternity, the Frenchman emerged alone. He called up a hansom; Sutherland called up one also, and away they rattled, one after the other.

The Frenchman's hansom stopped presently at a house in Gower Street. Sutherland, after noting the number of the house in passing, pulled up his hansom at the corner of the next street and walked quietly back again.

By this time both Caussidière and his hansom had disappeared, but Sutherland recognised the place. He walked up and down on the opposite side of the way examining the house, staring at it as if he would fain penetrate those dark walls and see the fair face which he suspected to be within.

Then he calmly walked over, knocked at the door, and inquired for 'Madame Caussidière.'

The servant admitted him, and he was at once shown upstairs. In one thing Sutherland was fortunate—Caussidière was not at home.

He had entered the house only for a moment to give his hurried instructions to Marjorie.

'Pack up your things at once,' he had said; 'prepare yourself by the hour of my return. We leave for Paris to-night.'

Then he had hastened down again, entered his hansom, and driven away.

* * * * *

Just an hour later the hansom containing Caussidière stopped again before the house. This time the man received his fare, and the cab drove away empty, while Caussidière entered the house and went up to his rooms.

He found Marjorie in tears, and John Sutherland by her side.

At sight of the latter he started, looking the reverse of

pleased; the presence of the young painter, by no means desirable at any time, was at that moment particularly embarrassing.

But Caussidière was not easily abashed; his presence of mind only deserted him for a moment, then he came forward with a sinister smile.

'So it is *you*, monsieur,' he said. 'I am amazed, but I cannot say that I am altogether pleased, since through finding Marjorie in your presence I see her with a sorrowful face, and with tears in her eyes.'

He came forward as he spoke and held forth his hand, but Sutherland did not take it. He rose from his seat and stood awkwardly looking at the two.

Marjorie rushed forward and took her husband's arm.

'Ah, Léon,' she said, 'do not be angry because I cried a little at seeing an old friend. Though I love the past, my love for you is not less; and he has told me such strange news.'

Caussidière smiled down upon her and patted her cheek. It was wonderful how self-possessed he felt now he knew that no one could step between him and his prize.

'Well, my child,' he said, 'and what is this great news which he has told you?'

'He has told me of my mother, Léon—of my dear mother.'

'Positively?'

'Do you understand, Léon, that Miss Hetherington is my——'

'Assuredly I understand, little one. If I remember rightly, it fell to my share to tax the lady with the fact some time ago, and she could not deny it.'

'Then you *did* know of it, and you never uttered a word; you never told me, Léon?'

'Told you? certainly not, *mon amie*! It was not my province to reveal the dark spots on the fame of the proud old lady of the Castle.'

'It was not your province to tempt an innocent girl away

from her home and her friends,' cried Sutherland, hotly; 'yet you have done it.'

The Frenchman flushed angrily.

'You will oblige me by leaving the house,' he said, 'if you cannot speak civilly. I have made this lady my wife. She belongs now to me and my country, and she accompanies me to Paris to-night.'

'No, not to-night,' said Marjorie, quickly. 'You will not take me away to-night, Léon!'

'And why not to-night, Marjorie?'

'Because I have promised Mr. Sutherland to go back with him to Annandale to see my—to see dear Miss Hetherington. She is ill, and she wants me, monsieur.'

'I regret it, but we do not get everything we wish in this world. I must leave for Paris without delay!'

Marjorie hesitated and looked confused. Then Sutherland spoke, unconsciously uttering the thoughts which had been in the girl's mind.

'You can go on to Paris,' he said, 'if you allow Marjorie to return with me.'

The Frenchman gave a smile which was half a sneer.

'You are consideration itself, monsieur,' he said. Then turning to Marjorie, he added: 'What does my wife say to that?'

'I—I don't know,' she stammered. 'I am so sorry for Miss Hetherington. It would be only for a few days, perhaps, and I—I could follow you.'

Caussidière smiled again, this time less agreeably.

'You seem to be tender-hearted, Marjorie,' he said, 'to everyone but myself. Truly an admirable speech to make to your husband in the first flush of the honeymoon. I am too fond of you, however, to lose you quite so soon.'

'Then you will not let me return?'

'Most assuredly I shall not let you go; what is Miss Hetherington to you or to me? She is your mother, perhaps, as you

say; but in her case what does that sacred word "mother" mean? Merely this: a woman so hardened that she could abandon her helpless offspring to the mercy of strangers; and afterwards when she saw her alone and utterly friendless had not tenderness to come forward and say, "Marjorie, you are not alone in the world; come to me—your mother!"

'Ah, Léon, do not talk so!' exclaimed Marjorie; then, seeing Sutherland about to speak, she went towards him with outstretched hands: 'Do not speak,' she whispered, 'for my sake. Since my husband wishes it, I must remain. Good-bye.'

She held forth her hand and he took it in both of his, and answering her prayer he remained silent. He had sense enough to see that in the present instance the Frenchman had the power entirely in his own hands, and that he intended to use it. He had noted the sneers and cruel smiles which had flitted over Caussidière's face, and he saw that further interference of his might result in evil for the future of her he loved.

So, instead of turning to the Frenchman, he kept Marjorie's hand and said:

'You are sure, Marjorie, that you wish to remain?'

'Yes,' sobbed Marjorie, 'quite sure. Give my love to my dear mother, and say that very soon my husband will bring me home again.'

He lifted her hand to his lips and kissed it again and again; then, without another word, he was about to leave the room when Caussidière stopped him.

'Monsieur,' he said, 'you will also, if you please, bear a little message to our much esteemed Miss Hetherington from me. Tell her that, though in the first days of our married life she has tried to separate my wife from me, I bear her no ill-will; on the contrary, I shall be glad to hear of her prosperity. Tell her also, monsieur,' added the Frenchman blandly, 'that since Marjorie Annan and I are one, we share the same good or evil fortune; that she cannot now gratify her malignity by persecuting Léon Caussidière without persecuting also her *own child*!'

CHAPTER XXV.

ON THE BANKS OF THE SEINE.

IN one of the narrow Parisian streets in the near neighbourhood of the Seine, close to the quays and old bookstalls, frequented by the *littérateur* out at elbows and the bibliomaniac, there is an obscure cabaret or house of entertainment, bearing the name of *Mouche d'Or*. Besides the sanded salon, with its marble tables and its buffet, presided over by a giddy damsel of forty, there is a dining chamber upstairs, so low that a tall man standing upright can almost touch the ceiling with his head, and so badly lit by a narrow window that a light of some sort is necessary even by broad day.

In this upper chamber one foggy afternoon in autumn, three years after the occurrence of the events described in the last chapter, a man was seated alone and busily writing at one of the wooden tables. His papers were scattered carelessly on the not too clean tablecloth, on which were spread, besides the said papers and a ten centimes bottle of ink, a knife and fork, a pepper box, a salt cellar, and stone bottle of French mustard.

The man was about forty years of age, corpulent, with jet-black hair and moustache, but otherwise clean shaven. The expression of his face was one of brutal and sensual good humour; his dress that of a workman, blue blouse, with white shirt very open at the throat; but across his breast he wore a massive chain of gold or pinchbeck, and his whole manner had a jaunty impudence and self-assurance not at all characteristic of the true *ouvrier*.

He wrote rapidly, almost furiously, now and then pausing to read, half aloud, the matter on the paper, obviously his own composition. As he did so he smiled well pleased, or frowned savagely. Presently he paused, and stamped with his foot the floor,

In answer to his summons a young woman of about twenty, gaudily attired, with a liberal display of cheap jewellery, came up the narrow stairs.

'Ah, Adèle!' cried the man, 'is the boy below?'

The woman answered with a careless nod.

'Give him these papers—let him fly with them to the printer. Stay! Is any one below?'

'No one, Monsieur Fernand.'

'Death of my life, Caussidière is late,' muttered the man. 'Bring me some absinthe and a packet of cigarettes.'

The woman disappeared with the parcel of manuscript, and returned almost immediately bearing the things ordered. She had scarcely set them down when a foot was heard upon the stairs, and our old acquaintance, Caussidière, elegantly attired, with faultless gloves and boots, entered the room.

'Here you are!' cried the man. 'You come a little late, *mon camarade*. I should have liked you to hear the article I have just despatched to the *Bon Citoyen*.'

'It will keep till to-morrow, Huet,' returned the other drily, 'when I shall behold it in all the glory of large type.'

Huet, as the man was named, rapped out a round oath.

'It is a firebrand, a bombshell, by ——!' he cried. 'The dagger thrust of Marat, with the epigram of Victor Hugo. I have signed it at full length, *mon camarade*—Fernand Huet, Workman, Friend of the People.'

Caussidière laughed and sat down.

'No man can match you, my good Huet, in the great war of —words.'

'Just so, and in the war of swords, too, when the time comes. Nature has given me the soul of a poet, the heart of a lion, the strength of Hercules, the tongue of Apollo. Behold me! When heroes are wanted I shall be there.'

Caussidière smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

'Well, is there any news?' he asked.

'There is, by heaven! Charles Norr is with us, and Deloraine.'

Ten new comrades signed and took the oath last night, and, in addition, a woman, worth all the ten, Louise Capel, in whose veins the divine blood of the Muses runs as in my own. Ha, ha ! you should have seen her as she heard the programme of the patriots. A Pythoness, by —— !

‘I know her well,’ answered Caussidière, contemptuously. ‘She comes to us fresh from the Salpêtrière.’

‘And what then?’ demanded Huet, striking his fist upon the table. ‘She brings the nymphs of the boulevards with her, and the corybantes of the cabarets ; and these, if the word were given to-night, could have Paris in ashes before dawn. Bah ! If you were a poet or a philosopher like myself, who am both, you would know what it is to have the women with us ; you would perceive how little chance for escape will be left for yonder little Orpheus of the Tuileries when the Furies are let loose and the Bacchantes begin to shake their gory hair.’

‘Well, we shall see,’ said Caussidière. ‘In the meantime, the German line is advancing, as you are aware.’

‘Let them advance, *mon camarade*. There are pitfalls before them, and worse pitfalls for our worse enemies at home. After all, look you, the Germans are our best friends, rather than our foes. Save for them the man of December, the Assassin, the Sullen Talent, would still be on the Imperial throne. *Ah diable !* he has fallen—all the rest will fall.’

Despite his flowery periods and general air of rhodomontade, Huet had not the air of a man who took his own opinions too seriously. His manner was hectoring and grimly humorous, rather than in any sense of the word earnest and convincing. While on this subject, I may explain to the reader that the patriot in question, Fernand Huet, was a journalist, not a workman. Though he affected the dress and frequently used the *argot* of the working classes, and when particularly facetious called himself a ‘tinsmith,’ he was never known to labour with his hands. But he was a familiar figure wherever working men of a political turn congregated ; he spoke and wrote as one of

them, contributing inflammatory articles to the *Bon Citoyen* and other Radical publications, and writing a great deal of patriotic verse, much of which, though never published, was industriously circulated from mouth to mouth.

He had come many years past from Normandy, where his parents were well-to-do peasants, and he had spent the interval, which embraced the whole period of the Empire, in scribbling, scheming, vagabondizing, and generally loafing. Tolerably well educated, he had put his knowledge to most ignoble uses. He drank a great deal, and was a great admirer of the looser portion of the fair sex. In fact, he had every vice of the honest Parisian 'patriot,' with scarcely one redeeming virtue.

The two men talked for some time on general subjects; then Huet, after regarding his companion with a prolonged stare, observed with a coarse laugh:

'You are a swell as usual, my Caussidière. *Purbleu*, it is easily seen that you earn not your living, like a good patriot, by the sweat of your brow! Who is the victim, *mon camarade*? Who *bleeds*?'

'I do not waste what I have,' returned Caussidière, 'and I love clean linen, that is all.'

Huet snapped his fingers, and laughed.

'Do you think I am a fool to swallow that *canard*? No, my Caussidière. You have money, you have a little nest-egg at home. You have a wife, brave boy; she is English, and she is rich.'

'On the contrary, she is very poor,' answered Caussidière. 'She has not a *sou*.'

'*Diable!*'

'Nevertheless, I will not disguise from you that she has wealthy connections, who sometimes assist us in our struggle for subsistence. But it is not much that comes to me from that quarter, I assure you. My correspondence and my translations are our chief reliance.'

'Then they pay you like a prince, *mon camarade*!' cried

Huet. 'But there, that is your affair, not mine. You are with us, at any rate, heart and soul?'

'Assuredly.'

Sinking their voices, they continued to converse for some time. At last Caussidière rose to go. After a rough handshake from Huet, and a gruffly murmured '*A bientôt,*' he made his way down the narrow stairs, and found himself in the sanded entresol of the cabaret.

Several men in blouses sat at the tables drinking, waited upon by Adèle.

As Caussidière crossed the room the girl followed him to the door and touched him on the shoulder.

'How is madame?' she asked in a low voice. 'I trust much better?'

Caussidière gazed at the questioner with no very amiable expression.

'Do you say Madame Caussidière? How do you know that there is such a person?'

The girl shrugged her shoulders.

'Your wife or your mistress, it is all the same! You know whom I mean, monsieur!'

'She is better, then.'

'And the little *garçon*?'

'Quite well,' answered Caussidière, passing out into the street.

Adèle stood looking at him as he sauntered away; then, with a gesture of supreme dislike, she turned back into the cabaret. A little later in the evening she was entertaining a select gathering of working-men and loafers with popular songs—some patriotic, others of very doubtful morality. She sang in a shrill, high voice to the accompaniment of a piano played by an old man; and from time to time, retiring into an inner room, changed her ordinary dress for a 'character' one, not always of the most modest kind. After each ditty she went round with a plate collecting coppers; and the money she took, depending upon the general enthusiasm, was generally in exact proportion

to the broadness of the allusions made in her last performance.

Leaving the *Mouche d'Or* behind him and passing along the banks of the Seine, Caussidière crossed the river and reached the neighbourhood of the Palais Royal. From time to time he exchanged a nod or a greeting with some passer-by, generally a person much more shabbily attired than himself. Lingered among the arches, he purchased one or two journals from the itinerant vendors, and then passed slowly on till he reached a narrow back street, before one of the doors of which he paused and rang a bell. The door being opened by a man in his shirt-sleeves, who greeted him with a 'bon soir,' he passed up a dingy flight of wooden stairs till he gained the second floor, which consisted of three rooms *en suite*, a small salon, a bed-chamber, and a smaller bedchamber adjoining.

In the salon, which was gaudily but shabbily furnished in red velvet, with mirrors on the walls, a young woman was seated sewing, and playing near to her was a child about a year and a half old. Both mother and child were very pale and delicate, but both had the same soft features, gentle blue eyes, and golden hair.

The woman was Marjorie Annan—Marjorie with all the lightness and happiness gone out of her face, which had grown sad and very pale. As Caussidière entered, she looked up eagerly, and greeted him by his Christian name. The child paused timidly in his play.

'You are late, Léon,' said Marjorie, in French. 'I have waited in all day, expecting you to return.'

'I was busy, and couldn't come,' was the reply. 'Any letters?'

'No, Léon.'

Caussidière uttered an angry exclamation, and threw himself into an armchair.

'The old woman had better take care,' he cried. 'Nearly a week has now passed, and she has not replied to my note—that is, to yours. And we want money infernally, as you know.'

Marjorie sighed, and her eyes filled with tears.

‘Why are you crying?’ demanded her husband sharply. ‘Because you have an unnatural mother, who would rather see you starve than share her wealth with you, or with the child?’

‘No, no, it is not that,’ answered Marjorie. ‘Miss Hetherington has been very good. She has given us a great deal already; but we require so much, and I am sure she is not so rich as you suppose.’

‘She is a miser, I tell you,’ returned Caussidière. ‘What she has sent you is not sufficient for an ordinary seamstress’s wage. She had better take care! If she offends me, look you, I could bring her to shame before all the world.’

‘You would never do that!’

‘But, yes! Why should I spare her? She hates me, and I hate her. If it is war à outrance——’

‘Oh, Léon, do not talk so!’ cried Marjorie, weeping now in good earnest. ‘I am sure you do not mean what you say, but it sounds so cruel. She is my dear mother, after all.’

‘A pretty mother! No better than a common woman of the town.’

‘Ah, do not say that! She is so good, and she has had so much sorrow. And think of me, of little Léon! Whatever shame and sorrow you brought upon Miss Hetherington we should have to share.’

‘And what of *me*?’ exclaimed Caussidière passionately. ‘What of *me*, who married you, who lifted you from the mud, where she left you, and made you my wife? I, too, must share the humiliation, I suppose. I, who could have married a lady of my own country, a lady without a stain, rich too! It is a pretty thing to live on like this, a beggar on your mother’s bounty; but I tell you I am sick of it all.’

At this moment there was a knock at the room door, and the man who had admitted Caussidière entered with a letter.

‘A letter for madame,’ he said.

Marjorie took the letter, and, while the man retired, opened it with trembling hands. Her husband watched her gloomily,

but his eye glistened as he saw her draw forth a bank order.

‘Well?’ he said.

‘It is from Miss Hetherington—from my—my mother! Oh, is she not good! Look, Léon! An order upon the bank for thirty pounds.’

‘Let me look at it!’ said Caussidière, rising and taking it from his wife’s hand. ‘Thirty pounds! It is not much. Well, what does the old woman say?’

‘I—I have not read the letter.’

‘Let *me* read it!’ he said, taking it from her and suiting the action to the words.

It was a longish communication. Caussidière read it slowly, and his face darkened, especially when he came to the following words:

‘If you are unhappy come back to me. Remember your home is always here. Oh, Marjorie! my bairn! never forget that! It is a mother’s heart that yearns and waits for you! Come back, Marjorie, before it is broken altogether.’

Caussidière tossed the letter on the table.

‘So you have been telling her that you are unhappy,’ he said with a sneer. ‘In the future I must see all your letters, even to the postscripts. And she begs you to go back to Scotland! Well, who knows—it may come to that yet!’

CHAPTER XXVI

MOTHER AND CHILD.

DURING the first few months of her married life poor Marjorie had worn as hopeful a look as any bride could wish to wear. For she was happy in a sense. Caussidière was kind, and the complete novelty in her new surroundings interested and amused her, and prevented her from thinking too much of those

whom she had left. Not that she ever forgot them ; on the contrary, the one great secret of her enjoyment of Paris was the thought of the wondrous accounts, almost like fairy tales, which she would carry to her old friends in Annandale.

She was like a child left alone on an enchanted island ; or like one who, after having spent all its life in darkness, is suddenly brought forth to gaze upon the glory of a midsummer sun. The splendour of the city filled her simple eyes with a wondering kind of delight. She was never tired of walking in the Champs Elysées or the Bois de Boulogne, and gazing with simple admiration upon the trim beauty of her surroundings. Their very artificiality pleased her, accustomed as she had always been to crag and moor.

During this time she saw very little of Caussidière—but at this she was not surprised. He had of course many pursuits which she could not understand, many interests which she could not share. It was inevitable, and Marjorie did not complain. If he was absent a good deal from her side, he had important duties, she said to herself, which called him away. For the rest he was not of a jealous turn. He allowed her to seek amusements out of doors, and enjoy them as well as she could alone ; and when he was with her he was ever ready to listen pleasantly to the account of the wonders which she had seen.

But novelties of this kind soon exhaust themselves, except to childish minds, and Marjorie was now no child. There came a time when the artificial and toy-like beauty of 'Lutetia of the Parisians' palled upon her ; her soul cried out for sympathy ; she looked around her and found that no sympathetic communion was at hand. She began to realize for the first time how very far removed spiritually she was from the man whose life she had agreed to share.

Gradually they had drifted further and further apart ; and now Marjorie asked herself where did the fault lie ? Perhaps with herself ; she had taken for granted from the first that she could not share his interests, and perhaps she had done wrong.

Well, she would try to repair the wrong, and perhaps in the future all would be well.

With a new hope in her heart she waited and waited for her husband to come to her. Caussidière was late that night, and he looked worried. Marjorie saw this with pain, and asked tenderly what was the matter.

'Nothing,' returned Caussidière petulantly; 'nothing, that is, which you could understand. If you have not supped, Marjorie, I'll sup with you.'

Marjorie had supped, but she would not say so. She ordered up the meal, and they sat down to it together, Caussidière meanwhile thinking of anything but the woman who sat beside him. When the repast was over he rose.

'Now, Marjorie,' he said, 'you must go to bed. I expect some people here to-night, and must be alone with them.'

On another occasion Marjorie, without a word of protest, would have gone obediently to her couch to think over Miss Hetherington's letters and her old home; now she paused, and went timidly to her husband.

'Léon,' she said, 'I am sure there is something troubling you. Will you not tell me what it is?'

Caussidière turned impatiently from her.

'Where is the use?' he returned; 'you would not understand.'

'But I will try,' returned Marjorie. 'I should wish to share your troubles with you, Léon, for I am your wife.'

Caussidière started and looked at her with a new light in his eyes. What did it mean?—was she going to be troublesome, this stupid little wife of his? Was she going to become something more than a lay figure through which his pockets could be filled? Any such signs should be crushed out with a merciless hand.

'Certainly, Marjorie, you are my wife,' he said, 'consequently you must do as I tell you.'

'Of course I will do so, but ———'

'Very good,' returned Caussidière quietly. 'I am glad you have learned a lesson which most women find difficult. It saves much trouble. It is much better to do things willingly than unwillingly since they have to be done.'

He turned away as if the subject was ended, but Marjorie was not satisfied; timidly she approached him again.

'Léon,' she said, 'I will obey you as I have said, but I wish to do more. I wish to share your troubles, to bring to you comfort, and to be to you all that a good wife should be.'

Caussidière gave a smile which was half a sneer.

'Suppose all this were impossible—what then?' he said. 'I tell you, Marjorie, the only thing you can give me is what you seem disinclined to give me—obedience. There, there, hurry away. I have more important things to fill my head than home worries. Good-night.'

She went to bed to spend half the night in tears.

From that time forth the idea of any spiritual communion existing between herself and her husband vanished for ever from Marjorie's mind, and she began to fear the man whom she had hoped to love and honour.

If she was tempted now and again to broach the subject which he pronounced a forbidden one between them, she was quickly deterred by the look which crossed her husband's face. It was that look which had made Marjorie begin to fear him.

Still she had one hope which kept her from despairing utterly—it was the hope of returning once more to her old home. During those weary days when she sat at home alone she recalled the promise which Caussidière had made to take her back and show her once more the faces and the home which she had loved. In every letter which she wrote to Miss Hetherington she spoke so eagerly of their meeting, and of the happy time which would come to her when she got back to Annandale, that she unconsciously gave the old lady a glimpse of the hopelessness of her domestic life.

Thus time rolled on. Days passed into weeks, weeks into

months. The first year of their married life had almost expired, and no mention was made of the promise which Caussidière had given. At length Marjorie, timidly enough, mentioned the matter to him. To her amazement he received the proposal that he should take her back with an amused smile.

‘And so you really think, little one,’ said he, ‘that I could bury myself again in that outlandish place, and subject myself again to the tragical airs of Madame Mère!’

‘But, Léon, you promised.’

‘Did I? Well, perhaps I did; but if so, that was before marriage. This is twelve months after. *Voilà la difference.*’

‘Do you say, then,’ said Marjorie in a voice almost broken by tears, ‘that I am never to go back home?’

‘Not at all. Probably you will go, but not yet. Why should you wish to go? Are you not contented here with me?’

‘Yes, I am quite contented, only——’

‘Well?’

‘Ah, do not be angry with me. Perhaps you would not comprehend, but it is so lonely for me. You have all your friends about you, and I have no one. They are all strange to me, and I long so much to see a face that I have known. Léon, dear, do you understand?’

It did not seem that he did understand, for he put her from him coldly.

‘You talk like a child,’ he said. ‘Lonely? Why should you feel lonely? Are not my friends your friends? What more do you wish?’

His friends! Marjorie shuddered as she recalled them—the boisterous men and coarse loud women who came to the house; and whom she shrank from and feared almost as much as she now feared her husband. At first her unfamiliarity with the language had alienated her from these beings, who revolved like satellites around Caussidière; and afterwards, when she grew more familiar with the tongue, she voluntarily kept herself apart.

What they were, who they were, she did not know ; she only felt that their lives could never be brought into close communion with her own.

Of all this she said nothing to Caussidière. They were his friends, and she knew that any comment upon them would be sharply resented.

So time passed on, and every day matters grew worse between husband and wife. The veil was falling from Marjorie's eyes indeed.

Often as she sat alone, with the troubled city all around her, she pictured to herself how different had been her lot when she lived a simple country girl by the side of Annan Water. Better for her, perhaps, if she had married John Sutherland and dwelt beside her own kith and kin.

How happy and peaceful all that life seemed to her now—now that she had no one with whom to share a thought !

Thus Marjorie came to that time in her life when the craving for sympathy is strongest. In the midst of the roar of Paris her child was born—a little boy, who grew into a bright-eyed little fellow, and became the idol of poor Marjorie's heart.

She had hoped at first that the birth of the child might knit more closely together the love of the father and mother ; but so far from looking upon the event as a pleasant one, Caussidière seemed irritated at the affair, and took no pains to conceal his anger. It simply meant a drag upon him, and as such he resented it.

So the boy who used to cling affectionately about his mother's neck learned to look with dread upon this tall, dark, gloomy man, whom he was taught to call 'father.' Seeing this, the mother loved him with all the strength of her young heart ; indeed it was his presence alone which kept her spirit from sinking utterly.

* * * * *

The receipt of Miss Hetherington's cheque seemed to come like oil upon the troubled waters of the little household. Caussi-

dière was certainly pleased. Though it was not so much, he said, as the old miser might have sent, it was certainly acceptable under the circumstances.

After taking care to pocket the draft he tossed up the boy and kissed him, and told Marjorie he looked as if she coddled him too much. Then he prepared to leave.

‘Shall you be back soon, Léon?’ asked Marjorie timidly.

Whenever she addressed him now she was always fearful of the reception of her words.

‘I shall not return at all,’ answered Caussidière; ‘or rather I shall be late, as I dine with a little party of friends. Do not sit up for me.’

And with another kiss blown airily to his offspring he was off.

Marjorie did not cry or show any sign that this conduct distressed her. She was too used to it for that. She turned in tender despair to her only comfort—the child. They sat alone together, the little one perched on his mother’s knee, listening open-mouthed as she talked to him of her old home. She told him about Miss Hetherington, about the manse, and Mr. Lorraine, who lay quietly asleep in the little kirkyard. How strange it would be, she thought, to take their little one there. How Miss Hetherington would love him; how old Solomon would stare and call it ‘uncanny’ to hear him prattling so prettily in French. Ah, but would the day ever come when she could take him there indeed?

Long after the child had gone to bed, Marjorie sat by the fire thinking of those happy days; she wrote to Miss Hetherington concealing as well as she could the dark spots in her life; speaking cheerfully and happily of her little boy, and still dwelling upon the hope of one day bringing him to her old home.

Then she sat down to wait for her husband.

Caussidière was late, and when he appeared Marjorie saw at a glance that all his good humour had left him. He was angry

at finding her up ; accused her of wishing to time his going and coming, and peremptorily ordered her to bed. Without a word Marjorie obeyed ; she saw that he was rather the worse for liquor, and that anything she might say would provoke him.

The next morning she rose early according to her usual custom. To her amazement, just as she was about to give the child his breakfast, Caussidière came down.

He had dressed with unusual care ; he took his breakfast silently, and when it was over he went upstairs again to add a few more touches to his already carefully made toilet ; and he reappeared, nodded to the boy and to Marjorie—he was too well-dressed to touch either—and left the house.

Though he had said nothing, Marjorie was certain from his dress and mysterious manner that it was no ordinary work which had called him away that morning, and as she thought of the strange cold way he had left her her eyes filled with tears.

Suddenly there was a knock at the door. Hastily brushing away her tears, Marjorie cried '*Entrez,*' and the door opened, admitting a woman, none other indeed than Adèle of the *Mouche d'Or*.

Of all the women of Caussidière's acquaintance this was the one whom Marjorie most wished to avoid. She was half afraid of Adèle, since she had on one occasion heard her singing one of her songs in a café crowded with men. Marjorie's strict Scotch training made her shrink from communion with such a woman. When she saw Adèle's face, therefore, she felt troubled, and demanded rather coldly what she sought.

'I seek Caussidière,' returned Adèle. 'Is he at home?'

'No,' returned Marjorie quietly, 'he has gone out.'

She thought this answer was conclusive, and expected to see Adèle disappear, but she was disappointed. She came in, closed the door behind her, walked over to little Léon and patted him on the head.

Léon gazed up and smiled, he had no fear of her ; but

Marjorie made a movement as if to protect him from her touch.

As Marjorie came forward, Adèle looked up from the boy's curly head, and asked almost roughly :

‘Where is Caussidière, did you say?’

‘I do not know,’ returned Marjorie, drawing her boy towards her; ‘he did not tell me.’

‘He seems to tell you very little about himself, madame,’ said Adèle, fixing her eyes strangely upon her companion's face; then she added suddenly—‘Why do you draw the boy away from me?’

Marjorie did not answer, so, with a short, hard laugh, the girl continued :

‘I suppose you think, madame, that I am not fit to touch him, that my touch will contaminate him? Well, perhaps you are right!’

‘I did not mean that,’ returned Marjorie gently.

‘If I kissed the little one, would you be angry?’ cried Adèle, with a curious change of manner. ‘Ah, madame, I am bad enough, but not quite so bad as you think me. I love little children. I once had a little boy like this of my own.’

‘A little boy! Then you are married; you have a husband?—’

‘When my child was only a baby, before he could walk or speak,’ continued Adèle, not heeding the question, ‘I—I lost him. I do not even know if he is alive or dead.’

And she lifted little Léon in her arms, and kissed him wildly.

Marjorie's gentle heart was touched.

‘You lost your child?’ she cried, full of sympathy.

‘He was taken from me, madame. I was too poor to keep him, and one night—one cold winter night—his father placed him in the basket at the Foundling. I have never seen him since—never!’

‘How wicked of you!—how cruel!—to desert your child!’

'You do not understand. In France it is the custom when folk are poor.'

Marjorie shrank from the woman in horror. All her maternal heart was in revolt, and with an impulsive gesture she drew little Léon to her, and embraced him tenderly.

Adèle looked at the pair with a strange expression of mingled sorrow and pity.

'And your husband, madame?' she asked suddenly. 'Is he good to you?'

'Yes. Why do you ask?' said Marjorie, in surprise.

'Never mind,' returned Adèle, with her old laugh. 'For myself, I think that all men are *canaille*. It is we others, we women, who bear the burden, while the men amuse themselves. Why does Caussidière leave you so much alone? Why does he dress so well, and leave you and the little one so shabby? Ah, he is like all the rest!'

'What my husband does,' cried Marjorie indignantly, 'is no concern of yours. I will not hear you say a word against him!'

Adèle laughed again.

'You are only a child,' she said, moving to the door. 'Will you give Monsieur Caussidière a message from me?'

'Yes, if you wish.'

'Tell him he is wanted to-morrow at our place; he will understand.'

She half opened the door, then turned and looked back.

'Do you know, madame, that in a few days the Germans will be before Paris?'

'Ah, yes!'

'Let them hasten! I hope they will come soon. I shall not be sorry, for one, if they burn Paris to the ground!'

'Why do you say that?' cried Marjorie, shocked at the speaker's tone as well as the words.

'Let them burn Paris, and me with the rest of the people; it will be well,' said Adèle, in a low voice, very bitterly. 'The bonfire is ripe, madame! But,' she added, 'I should be sorry

if any harm came to *you*, or to the child. Some day, perhaps—who knows?—I may be able to serve you. Will you remember that?

‘What do you mean?’ exclaimed Marjorie. ‘You are a strange woman; you——’

‘I am what I am; sometimes I think I am a devil, not a woman at all. Good-bye!’

And without another word she disappeared, leaving Marjorie lost in wonder at the extraordinary interview between them.

CHAPTER XXVII.

BEHIND THE SCENES.

ON leaving Marjorie that day and coming into the street, Caussidière walked along rapidly in the direction of the boulevards. He hummed a light air as he went, and held up his head with that self-satisfaction only felt by the man who has money in his pocket. Indeed, the receipt of Miss Hetherington’s draft had taken a weight off his mind, as he had an appointment that evening with an individual whose tastes were expensive like his own.

His first care being to turn the piece of paper into coin of the realm at the current rate of exchange, he bent his steps towards one of the numerous exchange bureaux of the city—a dingy shop in a by-street off the Boulevard des Italiens, the window of which was full of notes and money of all nations.

Behind the counter sat a little, bearded man in spectacles, presenting the unwashed appearance characteristic of most good ‘patriots.’ With this worthy Caussidière cordially shook hands.

‘Well, my Caussidière, what news?’ asked the money-changer.

There was no news, Caussidière explained, The ‘good cause’

(whatever that might be) was progressing famously. Meantime the visitor had come to transact a little business, which he at once explained.

The money-changer examined the draft, and nodded his head approvingly.

'Good; it is all right, I think. You can present this yourself and draw the money.'

'I want cash at once,' returned Caussidière. 'If you cannot give me all, let me have a portion.'

'How much?'

'Ten napoleons will serve.'

'You shall have them,' was the reply. 'But where are you going? What is in the wind?'

Caussidière smiled as he took the money.

'To-night I am going to the theatre; after that to a little supper.'

'And in good company, my Caussidière? Ha, ha! I have a guess who will be your companion. But madame, your little wife—what of her?'

'She is where all wives should be—at home,' answered Caussidière, with a shrug of his shoulders. 'Good day, and *au revoir*.'

Leaving the shop, he passed out to the boulevards. His business during the day does not concern us; but when it was evening, and the lights were lit, the cafés thronged, the foot-paths full of people coming and going, he reappeared in the centre of the city. Lighting a cigar, he strolled up and down; paused at a kiosk and bought a newspaper; then approaching the front of one of the great cafés, found a vacant seat at a table, ordered some coffee, and sat down in the open air watching the busy throng.

He was sitting thus when his attention was attracted to a figure standing close by him. It was that of a young man, dressed carelessly in a tweed suit, and wearing a wide-awake hat. He was standing in the light of one of the windows talking to another man, somewhat his senior, whom

he had just met. Caussidière caught a portion of their conversation.

‘And hoo long hae ye been in Paris?’ asked the elder man.

‘All the summer,’ replied the other. ‘I came here to study and paint, and I have been doing very well. How are all in Annandale?’

‘Brawly, brawly. Where are you staying?’

Caussidière did not catch the reply, and the two men moved away with the crowd; but he had recognised at a glance in the younger of the interlocutors an old friend—John Sutherland.

‘*Diable !*’ he muttered. ‘What has brought *him* to Paris. I must take care that he and Marjorie do not meet.’

He rose, paid for his refreshment, and walked away. It was now eight o’clock. Hailing a *fiacre*, he jumped in and ordered the coachman to drive to the Theatre du Chatelat.

The Chatelat stands in one of the great squares, and is one of the largest theatres in Paris. It is an establishment devoted, like the London Alhambra, to spectacular entertainments, not always of the most refined description.

Alighting at the door, Caussidière strolled into the vestibule and paid for a seat in one of the balcony boxes. He found the vast place thronged from floor to ceiling to witness the performance of a *Féerie*, then in its hundredth night, the *Sept Filles du Diable*, and founded on some fanciful Eastern story. It was a tawdry piece, with innumerable ballets, processions, pageants, varied with certain scenes of horse-play, in which a corpulent low comedian, a great popular favourite, was conspicuous. Caussidière was charmed, concentrating his admiring eyes particularly on one black-eyed, thickly-painted lady, who personated a fairy prince, and sang ‘risky’ songs, with topical allusions and dancing accompaniments, in a very high shrill voice, to the great rapture of the assembled Parisians. At the end of the third act Caussidière left his seat and strolled round to the back of the theatre.

CHAPTER XXVIII

A LITTLE SUPPER.

PASSING the Cerberus of the stage door, by whom he seemed to be well known, Caussidière soon found himself 'behind the scenes,' and pushed his way through a confused throng of supernumeraries, figurantes, and stage carpenters till he reached the green room.

Here he found many of the performers lounging about and standing in the centre of the floor. Dressed in a turban and sultan's robes, and surrounded by a group of ladies in all kinds of scanty costumes, was the obese low comedian—as loud-voiced, low-foreheaded a satyr of a man as could be found in the theatrical profession, even in Paris.

As Caussidière appeared, the actor greeted him by name with a loud laugh.

'Welcome, *mon enfant*, welcome,' he cried, shaking hands. 'The Germans are approaching, yet behold—we survive. As I was saying,' he continued, addressing the ladies, 'no sooner did Nichette perceive the monk in her chamber than, wrapping the curtains around her and uttering a scream, she exclaimed——'

Into the rest of his speech, which consisted of a highly-seasoned anecdote taken from one of the loose boulevard journals, we do not purpose to follow him; it would scarcely bear transcription, but *scabreux* as it was, it was received with shrill laughter and applause by the assembled ladies of the company. The low comedian, in fact, was famous for his funny stories, which were blasphemous when not indelicate, and generally stupid into the bargain.

The ladies now turned to Caussidière, who greeted them by their Christian names—Blanche, Rose, Ada, Adèle, Sarah, and so on. He seemed to know them well, but, as he talked to them, looked round impatiently for some person who was not present.

Presently the object of his search entered, being no other than the fairy prince he had admired so much from the first. Seen closely she was a young woman of about five-and-twenty, with bold black eyes, and a petulant mouth, significant of ill-temper. Directly she saw him she tossed her head and made a grimace.

‘So it is *you*!’ she cried. ‘I thought you were dead and buried.’

‘And you did not mourn me?’ returned Caussidière softly, with his most winning smile. ‘Well, I have come to ask you to sup with me to-night at the Café des Trente Etoiles.’

‘I shall not come! I am engaged!’

‘Nonsense, Séraphine. You will come!’

‘Of course she will come,’ cried the low comedian, breaking in. ‘My children, live in amity while you can, and drink of the best, for the Germans are approaching. Papa Corbert commands you—be merry, my children, while you may. Séraphine, Caussidière is a king to-night; you will join him, and drink confusion to the enemies of France!’

‘Why did you not come before?’ demanded Séraphine sharply. ‘It is a week since I have seen you. Were you nursing the baby at home?’

The ladies laughed merrily.

‘Ah, Caussidière is a model husband,’ exclaimed Mademoiselle Blanche; ‘he rocks the cradle and goes to bed at ten.’

‘Ladies,’ said Corbert with mock solemnity, ‘I conjure you not to jest on such a subject. I am a family man myself, as you are aware. Respect the altar! Venerate the household!—and since the Germans are approaching——’

‘Bother the Germans,’ interrupted Séraphine. ‘Let them come and burn Paris to the ground. I should not care. I tell you, Caussidière, I have an engagement.’

‘Don’t believe her,’ cried Corbert. ‘Séraphine will sup with you. She loves Brunet’s oyster-palés too well to deny you.’

Think of it, my child ! A little supper for two, with Chamber-tin that has just felt the fire, and champagne.'

* * * * *

An hour later Caussidière and Mademoiselle Séraphine were seated in one of the cabinets of the Café des Trente Etoiles amicably discussing their little supper.

The actress was gorgeously apparelled, splendid in silks and feathers, with jewellery everywhere about her, and diamonds sparkling in her hair. Her face was still thickly powdered and made up, her eyes and eyebrows darkened ; but despite the questionable style of her adornment she looked, to use the French expression, *ravissante*.

So at least Caussidière thought, as he sat and watched her with delighted, amorous eyes ; saw her sip her champagne, heard her merry bird-like laughter, as she freely exchanged jokes and repartees with the attendant who came and went.

The supper was charming ; Séraphine forgot all her irritation in the enjoyment of the dainties set before her, for she loved the sweet things of life, even down to a paté.

When the meal was done and the waiter had brought in the coffee, the pair sat side by side, and Caussidière's arm stole round the lady's waist.

'Take your arm away,' she cried, laughing. 'What would Madame Caussidière say if she saw you ?'

Caussidière's face darkened.

'Never mind her,' he returned.

'Ah, but I do mind ! You are a bad man, and should be at home with your wife. Tell me, Caussidière,' she continued, watching him keenly, 'does she know how you pass the time ?'

'She neither knows nor heeds,' replied Caussidière. 'She is a child, and stupid, and does not concern herself with what she does not understand.'

Séraphine's manner changed. The smile passed from her face, and the corners of her petulant mouth came down. Frowning,

she lighted a cigarette, and leaning back, watched the thin blue wreaths of smoke as they curled up towards the ceiling.

‘What are you thinking of?’ asked Caussidière, tenderly.

‘I am thinking——’

‘Yes.’

‘That you are incorrigible, and not to be trusted; you have given this person your name, and I believe she is your wife after all; and if that is so, what will become of all your promises to me. I am a fool, I believe, to waste my time on such a man.’

‘Séraphine!’

‘Is she your wife, or is she not?’

‘She is *not*, my angel.’

‘Then you are free? Answer me truly; no falsehoods, if you please.’

‘I will tell you the simple truth,’ replied Caussidière, sinking his voice and nervously glancing towards the door. ‘In one sense, look you, I am married; in another I am not married at all.’

‘What nonsense you talk! Do you think I am insane?’

‘I think you are an angel.’

‘Pshaw! Take your arm away.’

‘Listen to me, Séraphine. The affair is very simple, as I will show you.’

‘*Bien!* Go on!’

‘In a moment of impulse, for reasons which I need not explain, I married her of whom you speak, according to the English law. It was a foolish match, I grant you; and I have often repented it from the moment when I met *you*.’

‘*Après?*’ murmured Séraphine with a contemptuous shrug of her little shoulders.

‘*Après?* Well, the affair is clear enough. I am a French citizen, my Séraphine!’

He looked at her smiling, with an expression of wicked meaning. She returned the look, laughing petulantly.

‘What of that?’ she asked.

'Do you not perceive? So long as I remain in my mother country, where no ceremony has taken place, this person is not my wife at all. The law is very convenient, is it not? A marriage in England with an English subject is no marriage unless it has been properly ratified in France.'

Séraphine uttered an exclamation. She knew her companion to be unscrupulous, and she herself was not over-squeamish in the ordinary relations of life; but Caussidière's words revealed an amount of diabolic calculation for which even her easy morality was not prepared.

'Oh, but you are *traîtreux*,' she cried. 'It is abominable. Why do you not do what is right, and acknowledge her according to the French law?'

'For a very good reason. There is some one I love better, as you know.'

But the actress drew herself angrily away.

'You love no one. You have no love in your heart. I tell you, Léon, I am sorry for her and for her child. There is a child too, is there not?'

'Yes,' replied Caussidière.

'Does she know, this poor betrayed, what you have just told me?'

'Certainly not. It would only distress her!'

'It is infamous!' exclaimed Séraphine.

'Not at all,' he answered. 'She is very happy in her ignorance, I assure you. When the time comes and it may come when you please, I will tell her the truth, and she will quietly go home.'

There was a long pause. Séraphine continued to smoke her cigarette and to glance from time to time with no very admiring eagerness at her companion. It was clear that the frank confession of his villainy had not raised him in her esteem. Seeing her coldness, and anxious to change the subject he rang for the waiter and ordered the bill. While that document was being prepared he opened his purse and looked into it. The act

seemed to remind him of something he had forgotten. He felt in the pocket of his coat, and drew forth a small cardboard box.

‘I have something to show you,’ he said smiling.

Séraphine glanced up carelessly.

‘What is it, pray?’

‘It is this,’ replied Caussidière, opening the box and showing a gold bracelet richly wrought. ‘Do you think it pretty? Stay! Let me try it on your arm!’

So saying, he clasped the bracelet on Séraphine’s left wrist. Holding out her arm, she looked at it with assumed carelessness but secret pleasure, for she was a true daughter of the theatre, and loved ornament of any kind.

‘I see!’ she said slyly. ‘A little present for madame!’

‘*Diable!* No, it is for you—if you will accept it.’

‘No, thank you. Please take it away. I will not take what belongs to another.’

‘Then I will throw it into the street!’

At this moment the waiter returned with the bill. It amounted to a considerable sum, and when Caussidière had settled it and liberally fee’d the bringer, there was very little left in the purse.

‘You will wear the bracelet for my sake,’ said Caussidière softly as he assisted the actress to put on her cloak.

‘No, no,’ answered Séraphine, but without attempting to take the bracelet off. ‘Apropos, Léon, where do you get your money? You do not work much, I think, and yet you spend your cash sometimes like an English milor.’

‘I wish I were twenty times as rich, for your sake!’ cried Caussidière, evading the question. ‘Ah, my Séraphine, I adore you!’

He drew her towards him and kissed her on the lips. The present of the bracelet had prevailed, and she suffered the salute patiently; but there was an expression in her face which showed that she rated her admirer exactly at his true worth.

A few minutes later Caussidière, with the actress hanging on his arm, gaily quitted the café.

* * * * *

Dawn was already beginning to break dimly over the roofs of Paris when Caussidière returned home. He opened the street-door with a key, ascended the stair, and reached the sitting-room, where he found a hand-lamp dimly burning.

The light of the lamp, flashing upon his handsome face, showed it flushed and wild, the eyelids red, the eyes feverish and troubled. After quickly drawing off his boots, he took the lamp and passed quietly into the inner chamber.

There, in a quaintly curtained bed, lay Marjorie Annan fast asleep, her blue eyes closed, her golden hair scattered on the pillow, her arm, in its snowy gown, out-stretched upon the coverlet. Beside the bed, in a species of wooden cot, was little Léon, also sleeping tranquilly.

But Marjorie's sleep was troubled. Her lips moved, and she stirred restlessly, murmuring often to herself. Caussidière stood and looked at her, holding the lamp in his hand, and the rays played softly over the sleeper's sweet seraphic face.

Suddenly she started and opened her eyes.

'Oh, it is *you*,' she cried, with a faint smile. 'You are late, Léon.'

Caussidière nodded, but did not reply. Setting down the lamp, he proceeded to divest himself of his neckcloth before the mirror.

'I was dreaming when you disturbed me,' continued Marjorie gently. 'It was not a pleasant dream, and I am glad you woke me from it. I thought I was far away, by Annan Water.'

'Indeed!' muttered Caussidière, with some indifference. 'There, you had better go to sleep again.'

CHAPTER XXIX.

AN ARTIST'S MODEL.

ON the morning after her strange interview with Marjorie, Adèle of the *Mouche d'Or*, dressed in the wildly extravagant costume of a pétroleuse, and holding a flaming torch in her hand, was standing in an artist's studio—a grimy enough apartment, situated in a back street in the neighbourhood of the Madeleine.

She was posing for the benefit of the artist immediately in front of her, but her eyes were fixed not upon him, but upon the figure of a young man who was working hard at the other end of the room. Ever since she first came to the studio, just three days before, Adèle had watched this young man very curiously.

His behaviour interested her. He seldom spoke, but worked at his picture with quiet pertinacity. Presently the young fellow dropped his brush and walked silently from the room. Adèle turned her eyes upon his companion.

‘Who is your friend, monsieur?’ she asked abruptly.

The artist, deeply engaged in his work, failed at first to notice her question.

‘Who is he?’ she asked again.

‘He?’

‘Yes; the young man who works always and never speaks.’

‘He is a friend.’

‘Naturally, monsieur, since he shares your studio. But where does he come from?’

The artist smiled.

‘You seem curious about him, mademoiselle,’ he said.

‘What do you wish to know concerning him?’

The girl shrugged her shoulders.

‘Wish to know!’ she exclaimed. ‘*Ma foi!* I have no wish to know, monsieur.’

'Then I don't mind telling you. He is a countryman of mine. He was born in a village near where I was born. I knew him when he was a boy ; and when he came to Paris a few months ago, determined to work hard and compelled to live on slender means, I offered to share my studio with him, and he is here. There, you have lost your fierce look, and got quite a tame one into your eyes. You are no longer a wild creature of the Revolution. You are also stiff, I perceive. Take a few turns about the rooms, mademoiselle, then we will go on.'

The artist walked over to a table littered with all kinds of *débris*, filled a well-coloured briar-root pipe, and began to smoke.

He was a tall man, slight in build, rather good looking, but very carelessly dressed ; when he walked, he did so with a slight limp, though he appeared to have all his limbs ; and when he spoke French, he did so with a very strong insular accentuation. From himself Adèle had learned nothing of his personal history, for he was chary of giving that kind of information, and at times more inclined to work than talk. Their acquaintance was of the most business-like nature. He had seen her one evening in a *café chantant* ; had marked her as an excellent model for a figure he was about to paint in the foreground of a picture he was then busily preparing—the figure of a woman of the Faubourg St. Antoine, who was about to fire the Bastille. He had made her an offer, and Adèle, having her mornings free, and being by no means unwilling to add to her somewhat slender income, had accepted the offer, and had agreed to place three mornings of every week at the artist's command.

It was dull work, Adèle found, standing on a rostrum for an hour at a time in one set attitude ; and she had tried to relieve the monotony of the situation by chattering to the artist ; but finding that her advances met with scant encouragement, she soon relapsed into taciturnity, and became more interested in the young artist who shared the studio, and who worked at the other end of the room,

Having received permission to rest, Adèle shook herself like a young pantheress, and leapt lightly from the rostrum, while her employer, having lit his pipe, strolled off and left her in sole possession of the studio. She stood for a moment to stretch her limbs, already cramped with posing; then she gave a careless glance about her.

It was a dreary-looking room, with a great skylight, and a window commanding an outlook over the roofs of Paris. Artistic lumber was scattered everywhere — easels, palettes, paint-tubes, pieces of loose canvas, not to speak of a table on which stood an empty coffee-pot and some cups, some paint brushes, and a black bottle.

Adèle strolled thoughtfully to the further end of the studio, where the younger of the two men had been working. There stood the picture at which he worked so assiduously, covered with a green fold of baize. Adèle longed to have a peep at it. She listened; returned to the door; there was no sound; then she ran lightly across the room, lifted the loose baize, and exposed the picture to full view.

‘Holy Mother!’ she exclaimed, starting back with raised eyebrows and hands.

‘You are startled, mademoiselle,’ said a voice. ‘Do you consider the picture a bad one?’

Adèle turned and saw her employer gazing at her from the threshold of the room.

‘If you please,’ he continued, advancing, ‘we will return to our work. Your face has got some expression now; the rest has done you good.’

Without a word she turned from the picture, mounted her rostrum, and fell into her accustomed pose.

For a time the artist worked again silently, and Adèle, glancing from him to the picture, seemed deliberating as to what she should do.

Presently she spoke.

‘How long has he been in Paris?’ she said, indicating by a

sidelong movement of her head the person who usually occupied the other end of the room.

'Several months, as I informed you,' returned the artist, without looking up from his work.

'Who is his model?'

'Which one?'

'For *that* picture.'

'No one. He paints from memory.'

'Ah, then, he has known her? he is a compatriot of madame?'

'Of whom?'

'Of the original of that picture—Madame Caussidière.'

'Ah, you think you trace a likeness to a friend?'

'I do not think it, monsieur; I know it. It is madame, not as she is now—ah, no—but as she must have been years ago, before she married that *chouan* of a Caussidière!'

'You are complimentary to your friend's husband.'

'*My friend?*' exclaimed the girl; 'ah, no, monsieur, she is not that—she is too good for that—and if she used to be *his* friend, tell him he ought to help her. She wants some one's help.'

'Probably,' returned the Scotchman; 'but it's a dangerous thing, my girl, to interfere between husband and wife, and my friend will do well to keep out of it. There, that will do for this morning, Adèle,' he added, as she leapt from the rostrum; 'take my advice, and say nothing of this incident to madame your friend. It may unsettle her, and make the end of her married life rather more unbearable than the beginning of it.'

He lit up his pipe again and strolled carelessly about the studio until Adèle had left. Then his manner suddenly changed; he left the studio, rushed up a flight of stairs, and entered the little snugery above, where his companion was sitting, and clapped him on the shoulder.

'Sutherland, my boy,' he exclaimed, 'good news!'

Sutherland, awakened suddenly from a day-dream, started from his chair.

‘About Marjorie?’ he cried.

‘Yes,’ returned his friend with a smile, ‘about Marjorie. I have been talking this morning with a woman who is one of her intimate friends.’

‘Where is she?’ exclaimed Sutherland. ‘Let me see her!’

‘Now, look here, my good fellow,’ returned the other, ‘you must sit down and cease to excite yourself. Moreover, you must work cautiously, or my prize may turn out a blank. Yes, I have discovered in the model Adèle one who may tell you just what you want to know—who is often in the house with Marjorie, who knows exactly how happy or how wretched she may be, and who, if properly handled, may be made to tell you all. But you must be careful, as I have said, for she is a rough creature, and might turn stubborn. She is gone now, but she will return to-morrow, and you shall talk to her. Think it over, and decide for yourself the best way to act.’

He descended to the studio, while Sutherland sank again into his chair to think of Marjorie. Think of Marjorie! Did ever an hour pass when he did not think of her? Her presence in the city seemed to sweeten the very air he breathed. Wherever he looked he seemed to see her, and whenever he painted a picture it was her face which grew beneath his brush.

He had come to Paris still cherishing the one hope which had been his ever since that day when she had left them all for the man whom she had made the master of her life—the hope of watching and guarding her from sorrow. It was a wild, extravagant dream, and he soon saw its hopelessness. How could he guard her now?

He had watched her day by day; had seen with bitter pain her pretty face grow pale and sad; but he had shrunk from revealing himself, because he had feared to make her hard lot even harder for her to bear. Besides, although she looked pale and sad, he had no absolute proof of her husband’s cruelty.

But now he saw new hope ; he should be able to gain absolute knowledge if, as his friend said, he worked well.

He thrust his hand in his coat pocket and drew forth a letter.

It was one from Miss Hetherington which he had received only the day before. He turned to a certain paragraph and read :

‘Be sure to look to Marjorie. She does not complain, but I am certain from her letters she is unhappy. My poor bairn ! If you cannot gain information, you must go to her in spite of that man. She must not be left there to break her heart.’

No, she should not ; he was determined she should not. He would speak to Adèle on the following day, and act upon the information which she gave.

He spent a singularly restless night ; the next morning he looked pale and harassed. But after breakfast when he entered the studio he was quite calm. He was working with his customary ardour when the studio door opened and Adèle came in.

The moment she appeared he sprang up and accosted her.

‘I am glad you have come,’ he said in doubtful French. ‘I—I wish to speak to you about a lady whom you know well. Yes ; Nairn, my friend, has told me that you know her.’

Adèle fixed her wild eyes upon the young man, and then, with a curious smile, pointed to the portrait.

‘You mean her?’ she asked.

‘Yes, yes ! Tell me all you know concerning her. I am interested in her—deeply interested. My friend tells me that you sometimes visit the house, though how or why I cannot guess. What takes you there?’

‘I carry a message sometimes from the cabaret,’ answered Adèle.

‘And you see her?—you speak to her?’

‘Why not?’ said the girl somewhat defiantly, for she read in

the young man's face no little astonishment that Marjorie should see such company. 'Yes, I see her—and the child. She is like that picture, but changed, older. But there, perhaps you sometimes see her for yourself?'

'Only from a distance,' answered Sutherland. 'I have not spoken to her; she does not know that I am in Paris. But I have seen enough,' he added sadly, 'to suspect that she is unhappy and neglected. Is that so?'

Adèle looked at him for some moments in silence, then she said, with the low harsh laugh habitual to her:

'You know little or nothing, monsieur. If you will swear not to betray me, I can tell you much more—of her—and of her husband. *Diable*, I should love to do him an ill turn, and her a good one. Will you swear?'

'Yes,' answered Sutherland, startled by the girl's strange manner. 'For God's sake tell me all you know!'

Upon being further questioned, it seemed that Adèle knew really very little concerning Marjorie herself. She could only tell Sutherland what he had already, by quiet observation, discovered for himself, that Marjorie seemed unhappy; that there was no sympathy between herself and her husband; that, indeed, she seemed to fear him.

About Caussidière himself Adèle was much more explicit—indeed, she seemed to be pretty well acquainted with his secret life, and spoke of it without reserve. Suddenly she asked:

'Do you know Mademoiselle Séraphine, of the Chatelet?'

'No.'

'Well, Caussidière does.'

'What of that?'

'Well,' repeated Adèle, 'how dull you are, monsieur. You asked me just now why Caussidière neglects his wife, and I tell you.'

'He has an intrigue with an actress?'

'Not exactly. He simply prefers her company. When Madame Mère sends a little cheque, Caussidière changes it,

gives Séraphine a little supper, and leaves his wife to mind the baby at home. *Voilà tout.*

She turned as if about to leave him, but Sutherland called her back.

'Mademoiselle Adèle, I—I am not a rich man, but Madame Caussidière has friends who will not see her want. You have access to her, I have not; you can give her some money——':

Adèle laughed aloud.

'That is so like a man,' she said. 'Give her money! I give her money, who can earn but a few sous by singing at a *café*? She would think I stole it. Besides, she does not want money, monsieur.'

Again she turned to go away, and again he detained her.

'Adèle, you see madame very often, do you not?'

'I go when I can. I like the boy.'

'Women can often say a word of comfort to each other. You won't say that you ever met me, but if you can make her happier by a word sometimes——'

He paused in some confusion, and held forth a napoleon. Adèle laughed again, and roughly tossed his hand aside.

'Bah! kindness is not to be bought from Adèle of the *Mouche d'Or*. I shall see her often, for, as I said, I like the child.'

She walked away from him this time, lifted the green baize which covered the picture, and looked again at the face.

'Ah! monsieur!' she said; 'she does not look like that now; that is a happy maiden, peaceful as the Madonna, not Madame Caussidière.'

She dropped the baize again, walked away to attend to her master, who had just entered the room, and Sutherland was left to ponder over what she had said.

His reflections were by no means pleasant. He saw, or thought he saw, the whole motive of Caussidière's conduct from beginning to end. His had been no wild infatuation for Marjorie—he had married her knowing she was Miss Hetherington's child; in the hope of inheriting, through his wife, Miss Hether-

ington's wealth. So far his purpose had been gained. Miss Hetherington, overcome by fear of her son-in-law and pity for her daughter, had given largely from her own means, little knowing that these supplies were squandered upon Marjorie's successful rival.

During the few days which followed, Sutherland was like a man entranced—utterly bewildered as to what he should do.

Once or twice he saw Marjorie walking with her little boy in the streets of Paris, and he fancied that her face looked more careworn than ever. He dared not speak to her. It would be better, he thought, to make his presence known to Caussidière, and to give that gentleman plainly to understand that unless Marjorie's life were made more bearable to her, the cheques from Miss Hetherington would inevitably cease. That would be the only way to touch Caussidière's heart—it was the surest way to proceed, and Sutherland determined to act upon it.

One morning—some two days after his interview with Adèle—he left his rooms with the determination to find Caussidière. So engrossed was he with his new idea, that for the time being he forgot all else. He walked through the streets, along the boulevards. He was wondering how and where he should carry out his design, when he was suddenly startled by the sound of his own name.

He started, turned quickly, and found himself face to face with Marjorie !

For a moment he could say nothing. A mist was before his eyes, and his rising tears choked him ; but he held forth his hands to grasp her trembling fingers.

'Johnnie,' she said, 'it is really you ! Oh, I am so glad, so glad !'

He brushed away the mist which was blinding his eyes, and looked at her again. Her cheeks were suffused, her eyes sparkled, and a sad smile played about the corners of her mouth. She looked at that moment something like the Marjorie whom he had known years before.

The change lasted only for a moment, then her face became paler and sadder than it had been before, and her voice trembled as she said :

‘Johnnie, you must tell me now how they all are at Dumfries.’

She sat down on one of the benches which were placed by the roadside, and Sutherland took his seat beside her.

‘I was sitting here,’ she said, ‘when I saw you pass. At first I could not believe it was you, it seemed so strange that you should be in Paris, that I should meet a friend from Scotland.’

The tears came into her eyes again, and her voice trembled. Turning her face away, she beheld a pair of eyes gazing wonderingly up at her.

‘Léon, *mon petit*,’ she said, placing her hand upon her child’s golden curls ; then turning to Sutherland she said, ‘This is my little boy.’

As little Léon was not conversant with English, Sutherland addressed him in the best French at his command. He took the child on his knee, and the three sat together to talk over old times.

‘It seems so strange I can hardly believe it is real,’ said Marjorie. ‘Tell me how long have you been in Paris, and how long will you stay?’

‘How long I shall stay I don’t know,’ said Sutherland. ‘I have been here several months.’

‘Several months?’ repeated Marjorie, ‘and I see you to-day for the first time.’

‘I thought it would be better for us both, Marjorie, that I should keep away.’

Perhaps she understood his meaning, for she turned the conversation to other things. He told her of the changes which had taken place in Annandale ; that the old servant Mysie lay with the minister sleeping in the kirkyard ; that a large family filled the manse ; and that Miss Hetherington was the

only being who, amidst all this changing, remained unchanged. A grey, weary, worn-out woman, she dwelt alone in Annandale Castle.

'Marjorie,' he said after a long silence, during which she hung her head, weeping silently, 'the old life seems far away now, and all the world is different; yet it seems only yesterday that we were lass and lad. Do you mind when I first came to the manse, a wee bit lad, with a message from my father, and saw you playing on the hearth, bonnie as a fairy child?'

'Yes, Johnnie. And we grew friends at once.'

'Friends till death, Marjorie,' returned the young man solemnly. 'Will you be angry with me if I speak to you of something else?—of a promise you made to me not so long ago?'

'What promise?' asked Marjorie, a little startled; and as she spoke she drew her boy towards her as if to remind Sutherland that she was a wife and mother.

'It was this, Marjorie,' he continued gently; 'to let me know, to ask my help and sympathy, if ever trouble came to you.'

She trembled and grew very pale.

'You remember?' he said.

'Yes, I remember,' she replied, passing her trembling hand over the golden hair of the child.

Sutherland gazed at her with the sadness of infinite affection.

'And have you kept your promise?' he demanded, in a low voice. 'Has the trouble never come? Have you never been in need of my help, Marjorie?'

She turned her clear, truthful eyes full on his.

'Never,' she answered; then in more faltering accents she continued, forcing a faint smile, 'We have all our vexations; no one's life is all sunshine, Johnnie; but I have my child and—and my husband.'

'Is he kind to you? Are you happy, Marjorie?' demanded Sutherland eagerly, almost vehemently.

'What passes between husband and wife,' she answered, 'is not to be discussed even between old friends. Yes, he is very kind. Why should you ask me such a question?'

He saw that to push his questions further would only cause her pain; yet having gone so far, and being eager to seize the opportunity, he was determined not to cease altogether.

'Marjorie,' he said, 'may I speak of your mother?'

'Ah, yes!' she cried, her eyes again filling with tears. 'My dear mother!'

'She writes to me very often; indeed, it was at her wish that I first came to Paris. *She* is afraid—she has been long afraid—that you are not as happy as you deserve to be.'

'Why should she think that? I—I have never complained.'

'No; but she reads between the lines of your letters, and fancies—— Oh, Marjorie,' he continued more passionately, 'do not hide your heart, for her sake as well as for mine. Tell me the whole truth! Tell it as a sister would tell it to a brother; for are you not my sister? Did you not promise to be my sister till the end?'

She rose trembling and shrinking, as she replied.

'I have nothing to conceal,' she said. 'My mother and you are both wrong. Pray do not pain me any more by such questions. Good-bye, Johnnie! I must go home now.'

So saying, she held out her hand; he took it, and gave it a gentle pressure.

'Let me walk with you towards your home,' he said.

'If you will promise not to talk as you have done. Talk only of Annandale, Johnnie, and the dear old times.'

'I promise! I promise!'

Holding little Léon by the hand, they strolled quietly along under the trees. Presently they came to one of the many merry-go-rounds which are to be found in the Champs d'Elysée. Merry children were riding on the wooden horses, and mothers and nursery-maids were looking on.

Here little Léon clamoured for a ride, and Sutherland placed him on one of the horses. As he rode round and round, uttering cries of infantine delight, Marjorie looked on with heightened colour, her eyes full of a mother's tender rapture; and, gazing upon her, Sutherland thought to himself:

'Poor Marjorie! She loves her husband for her child's sake. I have no right to come between them.'

When the ride was done and the three passed on together, Marjorie seemed to have forgotten all her trouble and to look her old smiling self, but Sutherland's heart sank in deep dejection.

Close to the Madéleine they parted, with a warm handshake and a promise to meet again.

From that day forth Marjorie and Sutherland met frequently, and walked together in the Bois de Boulogne or on the boulevards, with little Léon for a companion. At her express entreaty he refrained from speaking to Caussidière, though he saw that, despite her attempts at cheerfulness, her face sometimes wore an expression of increasing pain. He began to suspect that there was something very wrong indeed; and he determined to discover, if possible, the exact relations existing between Marjorie and her husband. Meantime, the meetings with his old sweetheart were full of an abundant happiness, tempered with sympathetic distress.

It was something at least to walk and talk with her, to look in her face, to feel the pressure of her hand. His feeling towards her soon became holy and faithful beyond measure. His strong affection, purged in the fire of cruel disappointment, assumed the nature of a sacred sentiment, purifying and strengthening his nature, and sweetening his disposition towards all the world.

CHAPTER XXX.

A CRISIS.

SUTHERLAND'S suspicions were correct. Matters between husband and wife were rapidly coming to a climax. Day after day, and sometimes night after night, Caussidière was from home, and when he was there his manner towards his wife and child was almost brutal.

Marjorie bore her lot with exemplary docility and characteristic gentleness; but one day her patience gave way. She received a communication—an anonymous letter—which ran as follows, but in the French tongue:

‘MADAME,—

‘When your husband is not with you he is with Mlle. Séraphine of the Chatelet.’

Marjorie read the letter through twice, then she folded it and put it in her pocket. Caussidière was late home that night; indeed, it was nearly two o’clock before his latch-key was put in the door; yet when he mounted the stairs he found that Marjorie was sitting up for him.

‘*Diable*, what are you doing here?’ he asked.

‘Where have you been so late, Léon?’ she quietly replied.

He stared at her with an ominous frown as he said:

‘What is that to you? Get to bed.’

Seeing well that he was in no mood to be questioned, she obeyed him; but the next morning, when they were sitting at breakfast, she returned to the subject again.

‘Léon,’ she said, ‘where is it that you go to so often when you are away from me?’

Caussidière looked at her with a new light in his eyes; then he turned away his head and continued his breakfast.

‘What is that to you?’ said he roughly. ‘I have many things to do which you cannot understand.’

'And there are things which I *can* understand,' returned Marjorie quietly. Then she showed him the letter which she had received, and asked calmly, 'Is this true?'

Caussidière took the letter and read it with a scowl; when he had done so he tore it up and scattered the pieces on the floor.

'Léon,' said Marjorie, 'is it true?'

'Yes,' he returned. 'My friend Mdlle. Séraphine is entertaining and my wife is not; when a man has a little leisure he does not seek the society of the dullest companion of his acquaintance.'

He quietly went on eating his breakfast as if the subject were at an end. For a while Marjorie watched him, her face white as death: then she went to him and knelt at his feet.

'Léon,' she said, in a low trembling voice, 'let us forget the past; maybe it has been my fault; but, indeed, I never meant it, dear. I have been so lonely and so sad, and I have kept apart from you because I thought you wished it, and—yes—because you sometimes seemed so angry that I grew afraid.'

She tried to take his hand, but he thrust her aside.

'Do you think this is the way to win me back?' he said; 'it is more likely to drive me away, for, look you, I dislike scenes, and I have business which demands that I keep cool. There, dry your eyes, and let me finish my meal in peace.'

At that time nothing more was said, but once he was free of the house Caussidière reflected over what had taken place. He was in sore trouble as to what he must do. To abandon Marjorie meant abandoning the goose which laid him the golden eggs, for without the supplies which Miss Hetherington sent to her daughter, where would Caussidière be? There would be no more suppers and presents for Mademoiselle Séraphine. It was this which had kept him with his wife so long. If the supplies were to stop, he would easily reconcile it with his conscience to abandon her altogether.

But were they likely to stop? Caussidière thought it highly

probable. Of late the cheques had been very small indeed, while Miss Hetherington's letters had been very strong in censure. She plainly said that Caussidière's extravagant demands must cease, and that the money which she would be able to send in future would not be more than enough to supply the wants of Marjorie and her child.

The letter containing this information had set Caussidière thinking. If this source was drained dry, why not try another? At the theatre Mademoiselle Séraphine's salary was large; as her husband he would share it. She had extravagant tastes, it is true: but he as her husband could suppress them; then she as an actress had always the chance of obtaining presents from her numerous admirers, and Caussidière was too much a man of the world to object to her receiving these votive offerings if part of the proceeds went into his own pocket.

But to crown all, Caussidière was infatuated with the piquante and pretty actress, while he was seriously bored by his wife in their humdrum home. There was nothing whatever in common between him and Marjorie; and even the child of their marriage, though he regarded him with a certain sort of affection, was not enough to cement the union between them. He longed to be free: free to come and go unwatched and unfettered; free to marry Mademoiselle Séraphine if the humour seized him; free to follow any other vagrant amour for which he might have a fancy.

A wife like Marjorie was an obstruction. He could not tell her his plots and plans, she could not enter into his ideas. *Diable!* with a wife like Séraphine, on the contrary, how different it would be! She belonged to his own nation, she could understand him, they could conquer society together! And with the great events, the strange political changes, which were certainly looming ahead, it was so necessary to be unembarrassed, to have his hands quite free!

One afternoon, as he was about to return home in no very amiable frame of mind, an incident occurred which aroused in

his mind a feeling not exactly of jealousy, but of lofty moral indignation. He saw, from the window of a shop where he was making a purchase, Marjorie and little Léon pass by in company with a young man whom he recognised at a glance. He crept to the door, and looked after them, scarcely able to believe his eyes.

Yes, it was real! There were Marjorie and little Léon walking side by side with young Sutherland, his old *bête noir* from Scotland.

Half an hour later, when he reached home, he found Marjorie quietly seated in the *salon*. He stalked in, livid, and threw himself into a chair.

‘Léon!’ cried Marjorie, startled by his manner, ‘is anything the matter?’

He did not answer, but glared at her with growing fury.

She repeated her question. He was still silent. Then, as she sat trembling, he rose, crossed over, and put his fierce face close to hers.

‘Let me look at you! Yes, I see! You are like your mother, the ——’

He concluded with an epithet too coarse for transcription.

She sprang up, pale as death.

‘What have I done?’ she cried.

‘Do you think I am a fool—blind? Do you think I do not know who it is you go to meet out there? Speak! Answer! How often have you met him?’

And he shook his clenched fist in her face.

‘Do you mean my old friend Johnnie Sutherland?’ she returned, trembling. ‘Oh, Léon, I was so glad to see him; he is so kind—I have known him so long. I saw him one day by chance, and since then——’

‘Yet you said nothing to me!’

‘It was often on my tongue, but I was afraid. Oh, Léon, you are not angry with me for speaking to an old friend?’

The answer came, but not in words. Uttering a fierce oath,

and repeating the savage epithet he had used before, he struck her in the face with all his force, and she fell bleeding and swooning upon the floor.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE REVELATION.

THE mask of kindness having once fallen, Caussidière did not think it worth while to resume it; and from that day forth he completely neglected both Marjorie and her child. The supplies from Miss Hetherington having temporarily ceased, Marjorie was no longer necessary to him, indeed he was longing to be free, and wondering what means he should adopt to obtain his end.

If Marjorie would only leave him and return to her friends in Scotland the matter would be simple enough, but this she did not seem inclined to do. She thought of her child; for his sake she still clung to the man whom she believed to be her husband.

On the day following that when the cruel blow had been struck, she took little Léon by the hand and walked down to the Champs d'Elysée to meet Sutherland. She wore a thick veil, for the mark of Caussidière's hand was beginning to show itself upon her face, and tried to steady her voice; but the young man saw at once that something had occurred.

'Marjorie,' he said, holding her hand tenderly in his, 'you won't confide in me, but I can see your trouble for all that. Let me help you, Marjorie, for the sake of the old days.'

She shook her head.

'You can't do that, Johnnie. I—I must never see you again.'

'Marjorie——'

'Ah, don't reproach me, for I can't bear it. Léon was angry at my meeting you, and he said I must not see you any more.'

'He is a coward as well as a scoundrel! Marjorie, you won't submit to it—you will let me take you back to Scotland. Why should you stay here?'

For answer she gently drew her child towards her, and kissed him on the cheek.

'For his sake,' she said; 'my poor, innocent child! I cannot undo the past—I cannot save myself; but I can strive not to bring disgrace upon my boy. After all, Léon is my husband and his father. God help us!'

Sutherland, utterly beside himself with rage and pity, did all in his power to persuade her to leave her home and go with him to Scotland; but Marjorie was firm, believing as she did that such a step would bring disgrace upon her child. What she suffered she said she had probably a right to suffer; but the child was innocent, and in the eyes of the world he should not be disgraced. So finally Sutherland yielded to her entreaties, and promised not only to avoid meeting her, but to allow Caussidière to go free.

It was a hard blow to him, and when he left her and walked back to his studio he felt that the sun had indeed set for him, and that before his path there was nothing but the prospect of the darkest misery. It was bad enough before, when he could talk to her and bring her some comfort; but to stand by, and to know that he must see her suffer without a word, was heart-rending.

He had given the promise she asked, but when he reached his home and thought it over, he began to wonder whether or not he had done well. Was it right that he should stand by and see such things? He longed to go to Caussidière and to upbraid him. But then he thought it might make it worse for Marjorie; and since she was determined to keep with the man, it was better that she should be suffered to live in peace.

So he kept his promise, and spent most of his time in his studio painting her face.

It must not be supposed, however, that he neglected Marjorie

altogether. Since he could not see her himself, he engaged the services of Adèle Lambert, who had free access to Marjorie, to bring him an account of how matters stood.

Adèle was faithful, for she had taken a great liking to the young Scotchman, and through her he was able to send occasional messages to Marjorie and to little Léon.

At first her accounts were of the most gloomy nature. She told of Caussidière's cruelty and of Marjorie's wretchedness; but very soon her reports changed, or rather they dwindled to absolute nothingness, for Marjorie, discovering that Sutherland and Adèle were acquainted, and suspecting the reason of the French girl's frequent visits, carefully concealed her troubles, and gave Adèle to understand that things were growing brighter for her.

Such was the condition of affairs in Paris when Sutherland received a summons home. It came in the shape of a telegram, calling him to the death-bed of his father. Sutherland, believing Adèle's last reports were true, thanked God that since he had to leave Marjorie, he could leave her to comparative peace.

About the same time as Sutherland received the telegram, Caussidière was sitting in a private cabinet of the 'Café des Trente Etoiles' with Mademoiselle Séraphine of the Chatelet. The lady was by no means in a good temper, for, her lover's means being low, the entertainment he had been able to give her lately was not of the choicest; add to which that for some time past his votive offerings of jewellery had of a necessity ceased. Since her regard for Caussidière varied according to his means, she had not deemed it worth her while to make their interview that day a very pleasant one.

Nevertheless, since she had come, she ate and drank freely of what was there, but as soon as the little dinner was over she began to pull on her gloves.

'Séraphine,' said Caussidière in alarm, 'you are not going?'

'But I am,' she returned crossly. 'Why should I stay? I have an appointment to sup with the Marquis de Fécamp after the play.'

'And you are going?'

She shrugged her pretty shoulders.

'Why not?' she asked.

'Because I say so. I forbid it, Séraphine.'

She looked at him for a moment, opening her eyes like a child lost in wonder; then she burst into a peal of silvery laughter.

'That is the best joke I ever heard in my life,' she said. 'You object! and pray, Monsieur Caussidière, what right have you to object to what I do? I might as well pretend that I must ask leave of the Marquis to eat a lunch with *you*.'

'That is another matter—the Marquis is a married man.'

'And *you*?' she asked, with a sneer.

'I am going to marry you, Séraphine!'

'Ah, truly?—but it is better to be off with one wife before you are on with another, monsieur; and as madame still pines in Paris, I think I am at liberty to sup with my friends.'

Caussidière said no more. Perhaps he saw it would be dangerous, for Mademoiselle Séraphine's temper was by no means certain; and if matters were pushed too far it seemed not improbable that she would break off the match. So he gloomily helped her on with her cloak, kissed her twice when he said good-bye, and walked towards home with a very dark face indeed.

He had made up his mind that his game of fast and loose must come to an end; hitherto he had shrunk from breaking finally with Marjorie; not from any consideration for her, but because he wished to ascertain if all hope of obtaining increased supplies from Miss Hetherington was at an end. He saw now that further delay would be dangerous: he must either marry Séraphine or be content to give her up.

He walked on quickly, ruminating as to the best means of

beginning his scene with Marjorie, when accident came to his aid ; he was within a few yards of his own door when he saw a man emerge from it and walk quickly down the street.

Caussidière caught his breath, and a very ugly look came into his eyes ; the man was none other than the one whom he had strictly forbidden his wife to see—John Sutherland !

After a momentary hesitation he entered the house and walked straight to the sitting-room, where he found Marjorie.

She had been crying. At sight of her husband she dried her eyes, but she could not hide her sorrow.

‘What are you crying for ?’ he asked roughly.

‘It is nothing, Léon,’ she returned.

‘It’s a lie ; you can’t deceive me as well as defy me !’

‘Defy you !’

‘Yes, defy me. Didn’t I forbid you ever again to seek the company of that accursed Scotchman ?’

‘Yes,’ she returned quietly ; ‘and I obeyed you. I saw him once again to tell him we must not meet—that was all.’

‘I tell you you are a liar !’

Her face flushed crimson.

‘Léon,’ she said, ‘think of the child ; say what you please to me, but let us be alone.’

She took the frightened child by the hand, and was about to lead him from the room when Caussidière interposed.

‘No,’ he said ; ‘I shall say what I please to you, and the child shall remain. I tell you you are a liar—that man was here to-day—don’t trouble yourself to deny it ; I saw him leave the house.’

‘I do not wish to deny it,’ she returned. ‘Yes, he was here !’

The tears had come into her eyes again ; she passed her arm around the shoulders of her boy, who clung tremblingly to her.

‘Why was he here ?’ continued Caussidière furiously.

‘He came to say good-bye. He is going to Scotland—his father is dying.’

She bowed her head and laid her lips on the forehead of her child.

‘Why did you not go with him?’

She raised her head and looked at him with weary, sorrowful eyes.

‘Why did I not go?’ she said. ‘Ah, Léon, do not ask me that—is it the duty of a wife to leave her husband and her child?’

‘Her husband!’ he said, with a sneer. ‘Ah, well, since you are pleased to put it so, *your husband* gives you permission, and for the brat, why, you may take him too.’

‘Léon!’

‘Well?’

‘What do you mean?’

‘What I say, *mon amie*; I generally do!’

‘You wish me to leave you?’

He shrugged his shoulders.

‘I think *you* would be better in Scotland, and I should be better *free*.’

Again she looked at him in wonder. What did it all mean? She could not believe that he was speaking the truth. He had been dining perhaps, and drinking too much wine—as he had done so often of late—and he did not know what he said. Perhaps it would not be well for her to provoke him, she thought, so she said nothing. She turned from her husband, took little Léon into her arms and tried to soothe him, for the child was trembling with fear.

But Caussidière was not to be silenced.

‘Did you hear what I said?’ he asked.

‘Yes, Léon, I heard.’

‘Then heed.’

She rose from her seat, still keeping the child in her arms, and again moved towards the door.

‘Let me put Léon to bed,’ she said, ‘he is very tired; then I will come back and talk to you.’

'You will talk to me *now*, madame. Put the child down. I tell you it will be better for *you* if you do as I say.'

'To do *what*, Léon?' she demanded, with quivering lips and streaming eyes.

'To go back to your mother; to tell her that we do not agree, or any other nonsense you please, except the truth. We are better apart. We have nothing in common. We belong to different nations—nations which, for the rest, have always hated each other. So let us shake hands and part company—the sooner the better.'

The mask had fallen indeed! Poor Marjorie read in the man's livid face not merely weariness and satiety, but positive dislike, black almost as hate itself. She clasped her child and uttered a despairing cry.

'You can't mean it, Léon! No, no, you do not mean what you say!' she moaned, sinking into a chair, and covering her face with her hand.

'Mamma, mamma!' cried little Léon. 'Do not cry.'

She drew him convulsively to her, and gazed again at Caussidière. He was standing on the hearthrug, looking at her with a nervous scowl.

'It is useless to make a scene,' he said. 'Understand me once for all, Marjorie. I want my freedom. I have great work on hand, and I cannot pursue it rightly if encumbered by *you*.'

'You should have thought of that before,' she sobbed. 'You used to love me; God knows what has turned your heart against me. But I am your wife; nothing can part us now.'

'Do you really deceive yourself so much?' he demanded coldly. 'Then hear the truth from me. You are no wife of mine!'

'Not your wife!' she cried.

'Certainly not. My mistress, if you please, who has been suffered for a time to bear my name; that is all.'

She sprang up as if shot through the heart, and faced him, pale as death.

'We are married! We stood together before the altar, Léon. I have my marriage lines.'

'Which are so much waste paper, my dear, here in France!'

Sick with horror and fear, she tottered to him and clutched him by the arm.

'Léon! once more, what do you mean?'

'My meaning is very simple,' he replied; 'the marriage of an Englishwoman with a French citizen is no marriage, unless the civil ceremony has also been performed in France. Now, do you understand?'

'I am not your wife! not your wife!' cried Marjorie, stupefied.

'Not here in France,' answered Caussidière.

'Then the child—our child?'

'Trouble not yourself about him,' was the reply. 'If you are reasonable he can easily be legitimized according to our laws; but nothing on earth can make us two man and wife so long as I remain on French soil.'

He added coldly:

'And I have no intention of again expatriating myself, I assure you!'

It was enough. Dazed and mystified as she was, Marjorie now understood plainly the utter villainy of the man with whom she had to deal. She had neither power nor will for further words. She gave one long, despairing, horrified look into the man's face, and then, drawing the child with her, staggered into the inner room and closed the door behind her.

Caussidière remained for some time in his old position, frowning gloomily. For the moment he almost hated himself, as even a scoundrel can do upon occasion; but he thought of Séraphine and recovered his self-possession. He walked to the door, and listened; all was still, save a low murmuring sound, as of suppressed sobbing.

He hesitated for a moment; then, setting his lips tight, he lifted his hat and quietly descended the stairs.

* * * * *

When the great clock of Our Lady of Paris chimed forth five, Marjorie still sat in her room, staring vacantly into the grate. The room was bitterly cold ; the light of the candles was growing dim before the more cheerless light of dawn ; the last spark of fire had died away ; and the child, wearied with fatigue and fear, slept soundly in her arms.

Marjorie, awaking from her trance, was astonished to see the dawn breaking, and to hear the chiming clocks announce that another day had begun.

She looked for a moment into the child's face, and as she did so her body trembled, and her eyes filled with tears.

'My little boy !' she sobbed ; 'my poor little Léon !'

She laid him gently on the bed, and let him sleep on. Then she tried to collect her thoughts, and to determine what she must do.

'Go back to Scotland ?' No, she could not do that. She could not face her old friends with this shame upon her, and show them the child who should never have been born. From that day forth she must be dead to them. What she could not undo she must conceal.

She had a little money about her, a small cheque received from Miss Hetherington on the previous day ; this would enable her to ward off starvation at least for a time. In the meantime she must seek work, and by that means sustain herself and her boy.

She collected together a few things which were necessary for their comfort, and when her preparations were made she knelt by the couch and woke the child. The little fellow stared at her for a moment, then he seemed to remember what had passed, and he clung to her in fear.

'Where is papa ?' he asked.

'Papa is gone, my darling !'

He looked at her again for a moment, then his little arms stole round her neck, and he laid his cheek against hers.

‘Poor mamma!’ he said.

Marjorie clasped him to her breast and sobbed convulsively.

‘Ah, Léon,’ she murmured, ‘you are all that is left to me now; and yet perhaps it would be better for you to die!’

She continued her preparations, and when all was done she still lingered in the house, as if fearing to face the world.

At length she remembered Sutherland, remembered her pledge to him, and she resolved to keep it.

She would go to him, tell him part, if not all her story, and ask his advice.

She took little Léon by the hand and left the house, passing hurriedly through the streets, until she came to Sutherland’s lodgings.

She inquired for him, and found to her dismay that he was already gone. He had left the rooms on the previous night and returned to Scotland.

When she first heard the news, Marjorie felt as if her last hope had gone indeed, and she moved away trembling and almost in tears; but after a moment’s reflection she acknowledged to herself that perhaps, after all, it was for the best.

What possible good could have resulted from an interview with Sutherland? She would in all probability have brought trouble upon him by telling him her own, and she had worked mischief enough already to all her kin. No; she would trouble them no more, but, with little Léon to comfort her, she would remain as one dead, buried in the great city where she had not even one friend.

CHAPTER XXXII.

HOMELESS.

ONE bitterly cold night early in the month of November, the gendarme whose duty it was to patrol the Rue Caumartin suddenly espied a woman with a child in her arms crouching for shelter in a doorway.

He stopped, looked at her curiously, stooped down to look at her more closely, and demanded her business there. The woman stirred but did not rise, and the child, which she held clasped closely to her, uttered a feeble cry. The gendarme paused a moment, then he bent down, took her by the shoulder, and gave her a vigorous shake.

This time the woman rose, wearily and slowly, like one in physical pain; and the child clung to her skirts, and cried again. She lifted him in her arms, and passed with a slow tottering step down the street.

She was but poorly clad for such weather. Her garments were threadbare, and here and there they hung in rags about her, so she shivered and shrank before every touch of the frozen wind. The streets were dark and almost deserted, save for the gendarmes who paced with their measured tread up and down the silent streets. They looked at her as she went by, and thought of her no more. She passed along until she came to the Champs d'Elysée; then she turned aside, and, hiding herself among the trees, lay down upon one of the seats. The child cried feebly again, but she soothed him and again clasped him fondly to her, and so the two fell asleep.

A faint cry awakened the woman in the morning. She opened her eyes, and as she did so she saw the pale pinched face of her child turned towards her, and heard him feebly crying for bread. With a moan, she threw her arms into the air, and cried:

‘Bread, my child; I have no bread, and you are starving!’

The ground was frozen, and snow was falling; her hands and feet were benumbed, and her face was pinched with cold and hunger. She spoke to her little boy in French; and not one of those who had known her in earlier days would have recognised Marjorie Annan. Yet it was Marjorie—a starving woman looking at her starving child.

Two months had passed since she had left Caussidière, and ever since that day her troubles had increased. On finding that Sutherland had quitted the city, a sense of relief had come over her, and she determined to follow her first impulse to live alone in Paris and to devote her whole life to her boy. She had very little money, but she believed that the means of living were entirely in her own hands; for she had been tolerably well educated, and through her long residence abroad spoke French fluently.

Her first care was to take rooms and see little Léon comfortably though cheaply housed; then she looked about for employment. It was a difficult thing to find, friendless as she was; but at length she succeeded. She applied to a cheap bourgeois school, and as the terms she asked for her services were absurdly low, she was engaged as English teacher, and little Léon was admitted as a pupil in the school.

It was a life of drudgery, but in her simple way Marjorie was content. It was something to see her child bright and happy, and to know that he, the little outcast, was under safe protection. But Marjorie's troubles were not to be so easily laid aside. One morning as her work was about to begin she was sent for to the room of the principal, and quietly told by that person to leave the building with her child. In some unaccountable way her story, or some perversion of it, had become known, and she was no longer deemed a fit instructress for innocent children.

At first Marjorie was struck dumb, then she gave a heart-broken cry for mercy. But in vain. The lady was sorry but relentless.

'It would not do,' she said. 'I am sorry, but you must look to others for help: I cannot give it. If you remain in this house what will the result be? My pupils will all leave, and I shall be ruined.'

So Marjorie had to go.

For a time she was too much broken down to ask for work again; in fact, she was at her wits' end to know what to do; but the little store in her purse sank so rapidly that she saw want coming on. She roused herself, and once more faced the world.

There were few things she could do beside teaching; and she knew it would be useless to enter a school again. It would simply mean a repetition of what she had undergone; but she thought that by working at home she could offend no one.

She tried to get sewing in vain. She had no recommendations, and no one would trust her. She applied for house work with the same result. She was friendless, and no one would trust her inside their doors. Her purse was getting lighter and lighter, and the direst kind of poverty was staring her in the face.

What was she to do? The only thing she could do was to write and ask help of her friends. It was a last resource, and Marjorie shrank from it; but her reluctance disappeared when she looked at her child: it was for his sake.

She wrote to Miss Hetherington asking for a little help. She waited several days, but received no reply; three weeks passed and no answer came, while Marjorie was penniless. Up to this she had had at least the shelter of a roof; but now that her little store of money was exhausted, she was once more driven forth, with this time only the bare streets before her.

For several days she had been wandering in the streets, spending her few sous in bread in the daytime and sleeping at night in dark doorways or such places as afforded shelter. During these few days she had scarcely tasted food, but had given her little all to her child. Now there was nothing left

even for him, and he was starving. His pitiful cry for bread wrung her heart; she clasped him to her, and as she bent above him whispering words of love, the scalding tears coursed slowly down her cheeks.

It seemed that she must beg or starve.

She looked about her in a vague, hopeless way, and shivered. All the trees about her were nipped with the early frost, and the ground was white with snow.

Sick and depressed, she sat down on a bench near the Arc de Triomphe and wept bitterly. It was now broad daylight, and troops of workmen were passing along to their day's labour, women were passing along with heavy burdens, pretty sempstresses tripping along to the shops where they served all day; and in the open road a stream of country carts, laden with produce, was flowing in from the town gate.

No one noticed Marjorie, those who did glance at her seeing nothing to distinguish her from the other waifs to be found in all large cities. But presently she saw coming towards her a burly figure, carrying on its shoulders a piece of wood, from which depended two heavy cans. It was the figure of a woman, though one of man-like strength, who, to complete the masculine appearance, sported a black moustache and a whisker-like down on either cheek.

The woman was singing in a deep man's voice. She was about to pass by when she was attracted by little Léon.

'A thousand devils!' she muttered to herself; then, striding towards the bench, she demanded, 'What's the matter? Is the child ill?'

Marjorie looked up and met the gleam of two great black eyes, bold but kindly. She could not speak, but turning her head aside, sobbed again.

'Poor little mother,' growled the stranger to herself. 'She is almost a child herself. Look up! Speak to me! What are you doing here?'

The tone was so gentle and sympathetic, though the voice and

address were rough, that Marjorie cried in despair, from the bottom of her heart :

‘Oh, madame, we have been here all night, and my little boy is starving!’

‘Starving—the devil!’ cried the woman. ‘Do you mean it?’

As she spoke she stooped down, freed herself of her load, and rested her cans upon the ground; then, opening one of them, she took out a tin vessel brimful of milk,

‘See here—it is milk, milk of the cow! Let the little one drink.’

Eagerly and gratefully Marjorie took the vessel and held it with trembling hand to the child’s lips; he drank it thirstily, every drop.

‘Bravo!’ cried the stranger, filling the can again. ‘Encore! Another, little man!’

And little Léon drank eagerly again.

‘God bless you, madame!’ said Marjorie, ‘How good you are!’

‘Good—the devil! I am Mother Jeanne, and I have had little ones of my own. Now, it is your turn, little woman.’

Thus urged, Marjorie drank too. Mother Jeanne watched her with grim compassion.

‘You are too frail to be out in this weather. Who are you? You are not a Frenchwoman, by your tongue.’

‘No, madame. I came from Scotland, but I have been in Paris a long time.’

‘Where do you live, eh?’

‘I have no home, and no money.’

‘And no friends? The devil!’

‘Not one.’

‘And what are you going to do?’

‘I do not know. It is a long time since we have tasted food. I——’

Marjorie sank back, and would have fallen had not the woman’s strong arm supported her.

'Bad, very bad!' growled Mother Jeanne. 'See, here are two sous; it is all I have, but it will buy something for the child. After that, I will tell you what to do. Out yonder, close to the Madeleine, they will distribute bread to the poor of the arrondissement at ten o'clock. You will go there and take your place with the rest; they must help you—they cannot refuse. Do you understand?'

'Yes, madame, I will go.'

'That's right,' said Mother Jeanne, patting her on the shoulder. 'And after that, let me see—yes, after that, if you are English, you will go to the British Embassy and ask them for assistance.'

'Yes, madame,' answered Marjorie sadly.

'Courage. The little one is better already. He will be all right by-and-by. But I cannot linger, little woman. My customers are waiting, and I have yet to prepare the milk for the market. You will go to the distribution of bread, will you not? Any one will show you the place.'

Marjorie promised, clinging, as she did so, to the good creature, and gratefully kissing her hard hand. Mother Jeanne was touched. She brushed away a tear with the back of her hand, and uttered another sympathetic imprecation.

'And if all else fails you,' she cried, 'come to me, Mother Jeanne, at the *Mairie*, Rue de Caporal. I am poor, look you, but I would not let you starve. Remember, Mother Jeanne—Mother Moustache they call me sometimes—13, Rue de Caporal.'

And with a rough nod the good soul shouldered her cans and strode along. Poor Mother Jeanne! She was but one of the people, a common creature, with a rude visage and a coarse tongue; but as she glides for ever out of our story, let us be sure that the record of her oaths, like that of the famous imprecation of Uncle Toby, was blotted out by the tears of the Registering Angel.

Marjorie watched her till she faded out of sight; then, re-

freshed and strengthened by the healthful draught, she took little Léon by the hand and walked away towards the crowded streets.

* * * * *

Later in the day Marjorie, with the boy by her side, took her place in the long *queue* of poor which defiled into the doors of the great bakery in one of the narrow streets behind the Madeleine.

No one spoke to her, no one heeded her; all were too intent on their own needs. Old men and women, mothers with babies at the breast, *ouvriers* out at elbow, ragged urchins, formed the eager crowd. One by one they entered the open door, and passed out at another side door laden with their allotment of bread.

It took a long time for Marjorie to reach the entrance; but at last she came in view of the long counter, with its piles of bread, its bakers in white suits and caps making the distribution, and a clerk in uniform taking down the names of those who sought and received relief.

Haggard and wearied out, Marjorie came up to the counter, and faced a burly figure with a red face and a rough impatient manner.

‘Well, your ticket!’ cried this worthy sharply.

‘I have none, monsieur, but I am starving!’

‘No ticket—then I cannot help you. There, stand aside!’

‘Monsieur, for the love of God!’

Startled by the wild appeal, the clerk in uniform looked at Marjorie.

‘Who are you?’ he demanded. ‘Do you belong to this arrondissement?’

‘I do not know, but I want food; I——’

‘What is your name?’

‘Madame Caussidière!’

‘Caussidière!’ repeated the official. ‘The name is French, but you speak with an English accent!’

Here a shrill voice, belonging to some wretched woman in the background, screamed out loudly :

‘Monsieur Gavrolles, she is a stranger ! She has no right to claim relief while French citizens are starving !’

‘Hold your tongue !’ shouted the official ; then, turning to Marjorie, he said sternly, ‘But the old fool is right ! you cannot get help here !’

‘Monsieur ! one morsel—for my child !’

‘It is impossible. There, make room. The next !’

It was useless to plead and pray. Trembling and crying, Marjorie found herself hustled by the crowd back into the open street. She clutched little Léon by the hand, and uttered a low wail of despair as she tottered away from the place.

Suddenly, as she went, she heard a voice at her back calling to her, and turning, she found herself face to face with a ragged figure leaning upon two crutches and holding two loaves of bread. He was a young man of about thirty years of age, emaciated by want and disease, and a cripple from birth.

‘Look, madame !’ he cried. ‘I heard them deny you, and though you are not a *compatriote* I think it is a shame. They have given me two loaves—you shall have one, if you will accept it !’

But Marjorie shook her head.

‘You are good, ah ! very good ; but I must not rob you of what you need so much.’

‘I do not want it,’ returned the cripple. ‘I am not long in this world, and for the rest, to be hungry is nothing new. Take it, madame, for the sake of the child !’

And pressing it in her trembling hands, he shuffled hastily away.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A LONG JOURNEY.

ABOUT the very time that Marjorie was wandering homeless and hungry in the streets of Paris, two persons were journeying towards the city of London by the night mail.

One was Miss Hetherington of the Castle; the other was John Sutherland.

For fully an hour neither of them had spoken; the old lady, looking fully twenty years older than when we last beheld her, lay back among the cushions of the carriage, and fixed her eyes upon a letter which she held in her hand. For about the tenth time that night she raised the paper, and read the words which were hastily scrawled thereon:

‘DEAR MOTHER,—

‘I am in great trouble. I am in sore need. Will you help me? I do not mind for myself, but to see my little child in want breaks my heart.

‘MARJORIE.’

She read it through; then with a moan she let it fall again upon her lap.

‘Marjorie!’ she cried, ‘my bairn, my bairn!’

From his corner of the carriage Sutherland watched in silence. He was utterly in the dark as to what it all meant. He only knew that they were travelling to Paris and to Marjorie.

On the day before, as he had been quietly working at his pictures at home, his father having partially recovered, Miss Hetherington, whom he believed to be in Edinburgh, had suddenly appeared like a spectre before him, and without a word of explanation had commanded him to return with her to Paris.

On hastening with her to the Castle he found that a stormy

scene had been enacted there; that Miss Hetherington, beside herself with rage, had actually struck her old attendant in the face, and turned her from the door. What it was all about nobody seemed to know, and after one glance into Miss Hetherington's wild eyes Sutherland knew that he had better not inquire. So he quietly obeyed her orders, and the two started together by the night mail for the south.

But although Sutherland had been silent he had been none the less curious; and now, seeing that Miss Hetherington's wild excitement was passing away, he ventured to speak.

'Miss Hetherington!' cried Johnnie Sutherland. 'Is that a letter from Marjorie?'

'Ay, from Marjorie.'

She held forth her thin white hand, which now was trembling violently, and as Sutherland took the letter she uttered a low moan again, and for the first time that night her tears began to fall.

Sutherland read the letter, then he looked at the date, and exclaimed:

'October! why, it's more than four weeks old!'

'Ay, more than four weeks!' she moaned; then suddenly sitting erect, and looking fixedly into his face, she added: 'Johnnie Sutherland, what has happened to her *now*?'

'God knows; but maybe after all we are in time. But how did it chance to be so long in coming to you?'

'It went to the Castle, Johnnie, and Mysie kept it there. When I came home from Edinburgh yesterday I found it lying on my desk waiting on me. It had been waiting on me for a month, you see.'

Sutherland was silent. He was more troubled than he cared to say. A month! Ah! he thought, what might not happen in that time to a woman and child penniless and alone in the streets of Paris!

He returned the letter with a sigh, and did all he could to rouse and cheer his companion, who, now that her excitement

was over, suffered from a frightful reaction, and trembled and cried like a child.

They passed through London, and at last reached Paris.

On arriving at the station, Sutherland called up a fly, and ordered it to drive with the greatest possible speed to the *Hôtel Suisse*, a quiet establishment close to the boulevards. Once there, he ordered a private room, conducted Miss Hetherington to it, and proposed that she should wait there while he went in search of Marjorie.

At first she rebelled, but she yielded at last.

'Yes, I will wait,' she said. 'I am feeble, as you say, Johnnie Sutherland, and not fit to face the fog and snow; but you'll bring the bairn to me, for I cannot wait long!'

Eagerly giving his promise, Sutherland started off, and the old lady, unable to master her excitement, walked feebly about the room, preparing for the appearance of her child.

She had the fire piled up; she had the table laden with food and wine; then she took her stand by the window, and eagerly scanned the face of every passer-by. At length, and after what seemed to her to be hours of agony, Sutherland returned.

He was alone.

'The bairn! the bairn!' she cried, tottering towards him.

He made one quick step towards her, and caught her in his arms as he replied:

'Dear Miss Hetherington, she has gone!'

For a moment she did not seem able to understand him; she stared at him blankly and repeated:

'Gone! where is she gone?'

'I do not know; several weeks ago she left this place with her child, and she has not been seen since!'

The old woman's agony was pitiful to see: she moaned, and with her trembling fingers clutched her thin grey hair.

'Gone!' she moaned. 'Ah, my God, she is in the streets, she is starving!'

Suddenly a new resolution came to her—with an effort she

pulled herself together. She wrapt her heavy fur cloak around her, and moved towards the door.

‘Where are you going?’ demanded Sutherland.

She turned round upon him with livid and death-like face.

‘Going!’ she repeated, in a terrible voice. ‘I am going to him!—to the villain who first learned my secret and stole my bairn awa’!’

Miss Hetherington spoke firmly, showing as much by her manner as by her speech that her determination was fixed. Sutherland therefore made no attempt to oppose her; but he called up a fly, and the two drove to the lodgings which had been formerly occupied by Marjorie and Caussidière.

To Sutherland’s dismay, the rooms were empty, Caussidière having disappeared and left no trace behind him. For a moment he was at a loss what to do.

Suddenly he remembered Adèle, and resolved to seek assistance from her. Yet here again he was at a loss. It would be all very well for him to seek out Adèle at the *café*, but to take Miss Hetherington there was another matter. He therefore asked her to return to the hotel and wait quietly there while he continued the search.

This she positively refused to do.

‘Come awa’, Johnnie Sutherland,’ she said, ‘and take me with you. If I’m a woman I’m an old one, and no matter where I gang I mean to find my child.’

At seven o’clock that night the *café* was brilliantly lit and crowded with a roisterous company. Adèle, flushed and triumphant, having sung one of her most popular songs, was astonished to see a man beckoning to her from the audience. Looking again, she saw that the man was none other than the young artist—Sutherland.

Descending from her rostrum, she eagerly went forward to join him, and the two passed out of the *café* and stood confronting each other in the street.

'Adèle,' said Sutherland, eagerly seizing her hands, 'where is that man Caussidière?'

'Caussidière?' she repeated, staring at him in seeming amazement.

'Yes, Caussidière! Tell me where he is, for God's sake!'

Again Adèle hesitated—something had happened, of that she felt sure, for the man who now stood before her was certainly not the Sutherland of other days; there was a look in his eyes which had never been there before.

'Monsieur,' she said gently, 'tell me first where is madame his wife?'

'God knows! I want to find her. I have come to Paris with her mother to force that villain to give her up. Adèle, if you do not know her whereabouts, tell me where *he* is.'

She hesitated for a moment, then drew from her pocket a piece of paper, scribbled something on it in pencil, and pressed it into Sutherland's hand.

'Monsieur,' she whispered, 'if you find her I—I may see her? once—only once again?'

'Yes.'

'God bless you, monsieur!'

She seized his hand and eagerly pressed it to her lips; then, hastily brushing away a tear, she re-entered the *café*, and was soon delighting her coarse admirers with another song.

Sutherland had been too much carried away by the work he had in hand to notice Adèle's emotion. He opened the paper she had given him, and read the address by the aid of the street lamp; then he returned to the fly, which stood waiting for him at the kerbstone. He gave his directions to the driver; then entered the vehicle, taking his seat beside Miss Hetherington, who sat there like a statue.

The vehicle drove off through a series of well-populated streets; then it stopped. Sutherland leapt out, and to his confusion Miss Hetherington rose to follow him. He made no

attempt to oppose her, knowing well that any such attempt would be useless.

So the two went together up a darkened court, and paused before a door. In answer to Sutherland's knock a little maid appeared, and he inquired in as firm a voice as he could command for Monsieur Caussidière.

Yes, Monsieur Caussidière was at home, she said, and if the gentleman would give his name she would take it; but this Sutherland could not do. He slipped a napoleon into the girl's hand, and after a momentary hesitation she showed the two into the very room where the Frenchman sat.

He was dressed not in his usual dandified fashion, but in a seedy morning coat; his face looked haggard. He was seated at a table with piles of paper before him. He looked up quietly when the door opened; then seeing Miss Hetherington, who had been the first to enter the room, he started to his feet.

'Madame!' he exclaimed in French, 'or shall I say Mademoiselle, Hetherington?'

'Yes,' she returned quietly, in the same tongue, 'Miss Hetherington. I have come to you, villain as you are, for my child!'

'Your child?'

'Ay, my daughter, my Marjorie! Where is she, tell me?'

By this time Caussidière had recovered from his surprise. He was still rather frightened, but he conquered himself sufficiently to shrug his shoulders, sneer, and reply:

'Really, madame, or mademoselle, your violence is unnecessary. I know nothing of your daughter: she left me of her own free will, and I request you to leave my house.'

But the old lady stood firm.

'I will not stir,' she exclaimed, 'until I have my Marjorie. You took her from her home, and brought her here. What have you done with her? If harm has come to her through you, look to yourself.'

The Frenchman's face grew livid ; he made one step towards her, then he drew back.

'Leave my house,' he said, pointing to the door ; 'the person of whom you speak is nothing to me.'

'It is false ; she is your wife.'

'She is *not* my wife ! she was my mistress, nothing more !'

Scarcely had the words passed his lips when the Frenchman felt himself seized by the throat, and violently hurled upon the ground. He leapt to his feet again, and once more felt Sutherland's hard hands gripping his throat.

'Coward as well as liar,' cried the young Scotchman ; 'retract what you have said, or by God ! I'll strangle you !'

The Frenchman said nothing, but he struggled hard to free himself from the other's fierce clutch, while Miss Hetherington stood grimly looking on.

Presently Caussidière shook himself free, and sank exhausted into a chair.

'You villain !' he hissed ; 'you shall suffer for this. I will seek police protection. I will have you cast into prison. Yes, you shall utterly rue the day when you dared to lay a finger upon *me*.'

But Sutherland paid no heed. Finding that in reality Caussidière knew as little of Marjorie's whereabouts as he knew himself, he at last persuaded Miss Hetherington to leave the place.

They drove to the Prefect of Police to set some inquiries on foot : then they went back to the *café* to make further inquiries of Adèle. On one thing they were determined : not to rest night or day until they had found Marjorie—alive or dead.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

LIGHT IN THE DARK.

WHEN Miss Hetherington was hastening to confront Caussidière, Marjorie with her child was walking wearily through the streets of Paris.

As the daylight faded away the cold had increased; the snow was falling heavily, soaking her through and through. She felt sick and faint; she had given little Léon the bread which the cripple had given to her; but nothing had passed her lips since the draught of milk in the morning. Want of food, exposure to the cold, were beginning to deprive her of her senses; but she tried to pull herself together for the sake of her suffering child.

What was she to do? It seemed that both she and her child must die in the streets that night.

Suddenly she remembered what the milk-woman had told her; she would go to the English Ambassador—perhaps he would give her relief and enable her to get home.

She paused once or twice to ask her way, but she could get no answer. She was nothing more than a street waif, and was accordingly thrust aside as such. At last a little gamin gave her the information she asked. The place she sought was three miles off.

Three miles! She was footsore and faint; she had not a sou in her pocket; and her child was fainting with cold and hunger. It seemed to her that her last hope had gone.

She crept up a dark court, sat down upon the ground, took little Léon on to her lap, and cried. There was nothing left but to die. She folded her arms about the child, and, uttering a silent prayer to God, closed her troubled eyes.

How long she sat thus she did not know—she was falling into a strange sleep-trance when she felt a hand laid upon her shoulder. Looking up, she saw before her the figure of a

woman holding a lanthorn ; her face was bent down towards her ; her hand still rested with a heavy touch upon her shoulder.

Marjorie gazed at the face for a moment, as if trying to comprehend ; then she closed her eyes again, and sank with a moan upon the ground.

‘Wake up!’ said a shrill voice. ‘What are you doing here?’

Marjorie opened his eyes again ; then she showed the white face of her child, which was lying upon her shoulder.

‘Who are you?’ said the stranger. ‘Why do you not go home?’

‘I have no home,’ answered Marjorie, with a low wail of pain.

The stranger stooped down and looked scrutinizingly into her face, and Marjorie faintly perceived, by the dim lanthorn light, the puckered cheeks, heavy black eyebrows, and glittering eyes of a little old woman about seventy years of age. The old woman was almost bent double ; on her back she carried a large basketful of rags, pieces of dirty paper, and other *débris*, and in her left hand she held a heavy staff with a sharp iron point. She was, in fact, one of the old *chiffonnières*, or rag-pickers, who haunt the midnight streets of Paris.

Marjorie looked at her in wonder ; then she replied faintly :

‘I have no home.’

‘And no money to buy a night’s lodging?’

‘Alas, no, madame!’

‘You are English, by your tongue?’

‘Yes.’

‘Is the child yours?’

‘Yes.’

‘Have you no friends?’

‘None.’

The old woman gave a grunt of mingled sympathy and surprise. She was used to scenes of sorrow, but the mother’s beautiful face and the child’s patient suffering did not fail to touch her heart. She stood peering down with her black eyes, and wagging her head from side to side,

'It is bitterly cold!' she muttered. 'Even I, who am ever on my feet, can scarcely keep myself warm. You will be frozen if you stop here!'

Marjorie only moaned in reply. Presently the old woman fumbled in her pocket, and drew forth a small glass bottle, which she uncorked with trembling hand.

'Here, take a sip of this!' she said. 'It is good brandy!'

Thus urged, Marjorie put her lips to the bottle, and tasted its contents; but the coarse raw spirit caught her breath, and almost choked her. The old woman laughed feebly, and applying the bottle to her own lips, drank, and smacked her lips with relish.

'Oh, if you knew it, this is the stuff to put warmth into you, life and warmth! Ha, ha! when you are as old as I am, and have seen as much of the world, you will worship St. Eau de Vie above all the saints in the calendar. But now, tell me of yourself, Englishwoman! What has happened? What do you mean to do?'

A series of sharp questions elicited from Marjorie some information concerning the true state of affairs; her marriage with the Frenchman, her subsequent discovery and trouble, her struggle to earn bread, her miserable wanderings in the stony streets of Paris.

The old woman listened, and from time to time uttered a shrill exclamation.

'It is the old story, Englishwoman. Your trouble comes, like all the trouble in the world, from the men. Have you been to the Embassy, and asked help there?'

Marjorie shook her head.

'I tried to go, but it was so far—and I felt so faint—and I crept in here.'

The old woman peered out through the gloomy archway of the court. The snow was falling whitely—'a moving trouble' (as the poet sings) in the heart of darkness; and an icy cold was sweeping in from the street, and piling the loose drift knee-deep at the court's mouth,

'*Diable*, what a night! And the child, he is half-frozen! I tell you, Englishwoman, you will perish if you stay here.'

'God help me!' moaned Marjorie.

'Listen to me! Do you know the House of Refuge in the Rue de Dieppe?'

Marjorie shook her head.

'It is not far. I will show you the way. Have you strength to walk?'

'I will try, madame;' and so saying, Marjorie rose feebly to her feet. As she did so, she staggered and almost fell.

'Courage! Take another little sip of mother's milk!'

The old woman held the bottle to Marjorie's lips. Faint and despairing, Marjorie sipped the fiery stuff again, and though it scalded her mouth and throat, she felt it almost immediately send a revivifying thrill along her veins.

She stooped down, lifted little Léon, who had fallen into a sort of stupefied doze, and covered him fondly with the folds of her cloak. Then, preceded by the old woman, who flitted before her holding the lanthorn in her hand, she tottered out into the open street.

The wind struck her at the entrance of the court: she stumbled through the snow, falling and driven. All the air was black, but the troubled whiteness flashed and faded on every side. It was a wild night and bitterly cold. Half awaking, little Léon cried and struggled in her arms.

'This way, Englishwoman!' cried her guide, creeping and crawling rather than walking along the ground.

So they staggered on along the empty street; now pausing and cowering, as the wind tore at them and the snow covered them; now pausing and resting against the chilly walls or smothered window-sills, uttering low cries and moans as they went, blinded by the cruel snow. Whither they went poor Marjorie could scarcely tell, but the old *chiffonnière* knew every inch of road. Along snow-piled streets, down miserable alleys, past rayless public buildings and the lighted windows of houses

where the denizens were still awake, they struggled on ; and at every step the way grew darker, the window lights fewer, the snow deeper, the wind more fierce and shrill.

At last the old woman halted at the corner of a narrow street.

'This is the Rue de Dieppe,' she cried. 'Go right down till you see on the right hand a large door with a light burning above it, and an iron bell. Ring the bell, and they will come. I must leave you here, Englishwoman, for I have far to go.'

'No, no ; do not leave me,' moaned Marjorie, clinging to her. 'You have been so good. If you leave me I shall die.'

'I have done all I can, Englishwoman,' returned the other, disengaging herself. 'Go into the Refuge—they will receive you, no doubt. For myself, I must hasten, or I shall perish in the snow.'

Before Marjorie could restrain her, she flitted away with a feeble 'good-night' into the darkness. Marjorie staggered, uttered a despairing cry, and leant back, stupefied, against the corner of the street.

For a moment her senses seemed about to forsake her. The pavement rocked under her, her head went round and round. A cry from the child, who stirred feebly in her arms, recalled her to herself. She glanced down the gloomy street. Hope lay that way, and it was her last chance. She set her face against the wind and snow, and feebly tottered on.

The child was a heavy load to be borne by one so slight and frail, but her eager maternal love still gave her strength. She little cared now what became of herself ; better, perhaps, if she did not live to see the rising of another sun ; but come what might she would save the child, her darling, her little Léon. If she could only retain sufficient force to carry him to some shelter, to place him in some kindly protecting arms, she would be content.

Step by step, inch by inch, she struggled on. At last she saw streaming across the street before her a bright, beckoning light.

The sight of it sent a thrill of hope to her heart, and energized all her failing forces. She crept on more quickly.

The light was twofold—part streamed from a large window on the ground floor overlooking the street, part was shed from a large lamp suspended over an adjoining door.

She clutched the window-sill, which was heaped with snow, and endeavoured to look in. The lower part of the window was covered by a sort of wire blind, which was quite opaque and impenetrable to the gaze ; but there was a small open space at the side which commanded a view of the interior.

Still clutching little Léon, Marjorie peered in.

For a moment the light from within dazzled her, and she could see nothing. Then, slowly and at first dimly, she discerned the interior of a plainly furnished chamber, in which a large fire was burning, shedding a crimson light on the surrounding walls. On the mantelpiece was a plaster cast of Thorwaldsen's exquisite Christ, and suspended on the wall above it a large engraving of a popular picture, 'Our Saviour and the Woman taken in Adultery.' Other pictures, chiefly of Scripture themes, were hung upon the walls.

The room contained four human beings.

Two women, very ragged and woe-begone, were seated in crouching attitudes before the fire, conversing in monosyllables with an elderly female, dressed in black, with muslin cap and apron, and resembling a superior kind of domestic servant or nurse. The face of this female was somewhat hard and forbidding, and there was nothing in it to excite sympathy or awaken confidence.

But, gazing beyond these three figures, Marjorie saw, in the fourth occupant of the chamber, a form which at once riveted her gaze. This form also was that of a woman, but so different from the others—in beauty, in distinction, in all that constitutes genuine grace and charm—that no one could look upon her without a certain respect and awe.

This lady was seated at a large desk, somewhat like the

desks used in offices, quietly writing. The light of a lamp, hung close above her head, streamed down upon her golden hair thickly sprinkled with grey, her pale Madonna-like features, her tall graceful figure, and her small white hands.

She was about five-and-thirty years of age, and looked even younger, until, on closer inspection, the threads of grey hair were perceived, and the faint lines made by time and suffering, or both combined, became revealed. She was plainly dressed in black, with snowy collars and cuffs, and a light cap of muslin or some such light material.

She was beautiful still, though the first loveliness of her youth had passed. Every look and gesture betokened gentle birth and breeding.

As Marjorie gazed, the lady turned towards the woman, said something, and smiled. The smile was of ineffable sweetness, and made the gentle face, which had been beautiful before, almost divine in its expression. So at least thought Marjorie, who had never before encountered so tender a vision.

Turning away from the lighted window, she tottered towards the door. Coming under the stone portico she looked up, and read on the lamp above her these words :

‘ENGLISH HOME.’

Beneath was written on a scroll of glass,

‘Rest for the weary.’

Like an outcast spirit creeping to the heavenly portal and pausing faint and over-powered, Marjorie stood and hesitated, but not for long. At the side of the door was an iron bell-pull, communicating with a large bell. With a murmured prayer that God might at last afford her succour and an asylum, she reached out her hand and rang.

The bell rang loudly, with deep reverberations, and Marjorie was startled by the sound. Almost instantly the door swung open, and the elderly female dressed as a servant appeared upon the threshold.

The light from within fell full upon the wanderer, who stood trembling and clutching her tender burthen.

'Who is there?' said the woman in English, peering out into the darkness. 'What do you want?'

The sound of the English tongue went with a thrill of joy to Marjorie's heart. She uttered a low, appealing cry, tottered across the threshold, and then, utterly spent and wearied out, sobbed hysterically, and sank swooning upon the threshold.

When she recovered she was sitting before the fire in the room which she had inspected from without. She looked wildly around her. The two outcast women sat near her, gazing at her in wonder; close by sat the elderly servant with little Léon, pale as death, stretched upon her knee, and bending above her, pressing a glass of wine to her lips, was the lady of the Refuge.

She stretched out her arms wildly, and gave vent to a low, appealing moan. Then her head went round again, and she once more sank into a lifeless swoon.

CHAPTER XXXV.

RESCUED.

WHEN Marjorie again opened her eyes she was lying in a strange bed, and the lady with the pale, grave face was still bending above her.

'Where am I?' she cried, starting up; and then she looked around for her child.

A cold hand was placed upon her feverishly burning forehead, and she was gently laid back upon her pillow.

'The child is quite safe,' said a low sweet voice. 'We have put him in a cot, and he is sleeping; try to sleep too, and when you waken you will be stronger, and you shall have the little boy.'

Marjorie closed her eyes and moaned, and soon fell into a heavy, feverish sleep.

Having seized her system, the fever kept its burning hold, and for many days the mistress of the house thought that Marjorie would die; but fortunately her constitution was strong; she passed through the ordeal, and one day she opened her eyes on what seemed to her a new world.

For a time she lay quietly looking about her, without a movement and without a word. The room in which she lay was small, but prettily fitted up. There were crucifixes on the wall, and dimity curtains to the bed and the windows; through the diamond panes the sun was faintly shining; a cosy fire filled the grate; on the hearth sat a woman, evidently a nurse; while on the hearthrug was little Léon, quiet as a mouse, and with his lap full of toys.

It was so dreamy and so peaceful that she could just hear the murmur of life outside, and the faint crackling of the fire on the hearth—that was all.

She lay for a time watching the two figures as in a vision; then the memory of all that had passed came back upon her, and she sobbed. In a moment the woman rose and came over to her, while little Léon ran to the bedside, and took her thin white hand.

‘Mamma,’ he said, ‘don’t cry!’

For in spite of herself Marjorie felt the tears coursing down her cheeks. The nurse said nothing. She smoothed back the hair from her forehead, and quietly waited until the invalid’s grief had passed away.

Then she said gently:

‘Do not grieve, madame. The worst of your illness is over. You will soon be well.’

‘Have I been very ill?’ asked Marjorie faintly.

‘Yes, very ill. We thought that you would die.’

‘And you have nursed me—you have saved me? Oh, you are very good! Who—who are you—where am I?’

'You are amongst friends. This house is the home of everyone who needs a home. It belongs to Miss Esther Dove. It was she who found you fainting on our doorstep, and took you in. When you fell into a fever she gave you into my charge. I am one of the nurses.'

She added quietly :

'There, do not ask me more questions now, for you are weak, and must be very careful. Take this, and then, if you will promise to soothe yourself, the little boy shall stay beside you while you sleep.'

Marjorie took the food that was offered to her and gave the promise required. Indeed, she felt too weak to talk.

The nurse, having lifted little Léon into the bed, returned to her chair beside the fire, while Marjorie put her arm around the little fellow's shoulders and presently fell asleep.

Now that the fever had actually passed away, Marjorie's convalescence was rapid.

She still kept to her bed, being too weak even to move without assistance, and during the day little Léon was constantly with her. She asked a few questions, and the more she heard the more her curiosity was aroused.

One day she inquired for the grave lady whose face she dimly remembered to have seen, and who she now heard was the mistress of the house. In the afternoon the lady came to the bedside.

Marjorie was sitting up in bed that day, propped up by pillows, looking the very ghost of what she once had been ; while on the bed beside her was little Léon, surrounded by his toys. He looked up, laughed, and clapped his hands when Miss Dove came in, but she only smiled and gently rebuked him for his boisterousness.

Then she sat down beside the bed and took Marjorie's hand.

'Well, my child,' she said, 'so you are rapidly getting well.'

For a moment Marjorie was silent—she could not speak. The

tears were blinding her eyes and choking her voice, but she bent her head and kissed the hand that had saved her.

'Come, come,' said Miss Dove; 'you must not give way like this. You have to tell me all about yourself, for at present I know absolutely nothing.'

With an effort, Marjorie conquered her emotion and dried her tears. But what had she to tell?—nothing, it seemed, except that she was friendless and alone.

'Nay,' said the lady gently. 'You are not that; from the moment you entered this door you had friends. But tell me, my child, how was it I found you and your child starving upon my threshold? You have a husband, perhaps? Is he alive or dead?'

Marjorie shook her head.

'He is here in Paris, madame.'

'And his name is Caussidière, is it not? So Léon has told me.'

'Yes, madame, Monsieur Caussidière.'

'We must seek him out,' continued Miss Dove. 'Such conduct is not to be endured. A man has no right to bring his wife to a foreign country and then desert her.'

'Ah, no,' cried Marjorie; 'you must not do that! I will leave the house whenever you wish, madame, but do not force me to see *him* again.'

Miss Dove looked at her for a moment in silence; then she rang for the nurse, lifted Léon from the bed, and sent him away.

'Now, my child,' she said, when the two women were alone, 'tell me your story.'

And Marjorie told it, or as much of it as she could recall. She told of her early life in the quaint old manse in Annandale with Mr. Lorraine, Solomon and Mysie; of Miss Hetherington, and of the Frenchman who came with his specious tongue and wooed her away. Then she told of her life in Paris, of her gradual estrangement from all her friends, and finally of her

desertion by the man whom until then she had believed to be her husband.

'So,' said the lady, when she had finished, 'you were married by the English law, and the man is in reality not your husband. Well, the only thing we can do is to leave him alone altogether, and apply to your friends.'

Marjorie shook her head.

'That is useless, madame,' she said. 'When my little boy had nought but starvation before him, I wrote to my mother in Annandale, but she did not answer me.'

'Is that so ?'

'Yes, madame, it is true.'

'It is very strange,' she said, 'but we must see what can be done, Marjorie—may I call you Marjorie? In the meantime you must not think of all these sad things. You must amuse yourself with Léon, and get well quickly, and my task will be the lighter.'

After this interview Miss Dove visited Marjorie every day, and sometimes sat for an hour or more by her bedside; and when at length the invalid, who gained strength every day, was able to rise from her bed, she lay upon a couch by the window, and watched the sunshine creeping into the streets. The more she saw of Miss Dove, the more interested she grew, until at length she was induced to question her nurse as to the antecedents of her protectress.

But all the nurse knew was that Miss Dove was a lady who, having passed through great trouble, determined to spend the rest of her life in doing good. She was possessed of a very large fortune, the whole, or nearly the whole of which she spent in works of charity. She had founded several homes for destitute women, and between them her days were spent. She was an accomplished nurse, and had on several occasions voluntarily gone to the seat of war, not only to spend her money upon the wounded soldiers, but to pass through the drudgery of nursing them with her own hands.

One or two cases similar in character to that of Marjorie having reached her, she founded a home—the very home in which Marjorie was now lying—for destitute and friendless Englishwomen in Paris. As Marjorie learned all this, she could not but thank God, who had guided her footsteps to that threshold. It had not only saved her life, but that of her child.

It was not like Marjorie to remain idle when there was so much to be done, and as her weakness passed away her brain began to work, planning for the future. She had several schemes made when she spoke of them one night to Miss Dove.

The lady listened quietly, then she said :

‘You would rather remain in Paris, Marjorie, than go home ?’

‘Madame, I have no home.’

‘You have Annandale Castle.’

She shook her head.

‘Indeed, it is not my home now ! I wrote, and there was no answer.’

‘But suppose you heard that that was all a mistake ; suppose you learned that your dear mother was ready to open her arms to receive you, what would you say then, my child ?’

Marjorie did not reply. If the truth must be told, her troubled heart found little comfort in the thought of a meeting with Miss Hetherington. Despite the encouraging letters that had passed between them, she still pictured her mother as stern, strange, and forbidding, the mistress of Annandale Castle, whose tongue was like a sharp-edged sword, and whose ways were full of bitterness and violence. Since she had learned the secret of her birth, she had often thought it all over, and always with renewed pain and a certain fear.

At last, after a long reflection, she spoke :

‘I know my mother—she is my mother—is very good ; but it has all been a fatality since I was born, and I can hardly realize yet that we are so close akin. Ah ! if I had but known, madame ! If she had but told me at the first ! I should never have left Scotland, or known so much sorrow !’

Miss Dove sighed in sympathetic acquiescence.

'It is a sad story,' she replied. 'Your mother, proud lady as she is, has been a great sinner; but she has been terribly punished. Surely, my child, you do not bear any anger against her in your heart?'

'None, madame; but she is so strange and proud. I am almost afraid of her still.'

'And you have other loving friends,' continued the lady, smiling kindly. 'Do you remember Mr. Sutherland?'

'Johnnie Sutherland?' cried Marjorie joyfully. 'Who told you of *him*?'

'Himself. He is back here in Paris.'

Marjorie uttered a cry of delight.

'You have seen him? You have spoken to him? He knows——'

'He knows everything, my child; and he is waiting below till I give him the signal to come up. Can you bear to see him?'

There was no need to ask that question; Marjorie's flushed cheek and sparkling eye had answered it long before. Miss Dove stole quietly from the room, and almost immediately reappeared, followed by Sutherland himself.

'Marjorie! my poor Marjorie!' he cried, seizing her hands and almost sobbing.

But who was this that Marjorie saw approaching, through the mist of her own joyful tears? A stooping figure, leaning upon a staff, turning towards her a haggard face, and stretching out a trembling palsied hand! It was Miss Hetherington, trembling and weeping, all the harsh lineaments softened with the yearning of a mother's love.

'My bairn! my bairn!'

'Oh, mother! mother!' cried Marjorie; and mother and daughter clung together, reunited in a passionate embrace.

CHAPTER XXXVI

HOME AGAIN.

THEY took her home with her little boy to Annandale, and there in the old Castle Marjorie soon recovered health and strength.

It was winter still ; the landscape was white with snow, the trees hung heavily under their icy load, and a blue mask of ice covered the flowing Annan from bank to bank ; but to Marjorie all was gladsome and familiar as she moved about from scene to scene.

She wore black, like a widow, and so did little Léon ; and, indeed, it was a common report everywhere that her husband was dead and that she was left alone.

As to Miss Hetherington's secret, all the world knew it now, for the swift tongue of scandal had been busy long before Marjorie's return. Heedless of the shame, heedless of all things in the world save her joy in the possession of her daughter, the grand old lady remained in deep seclusion in her lonely ancestral home.

The time of alienation and misunderstanding was long over. Bit by bit, detail by detail, in the confidence of those days, Miss Hetherington told the story of her life, and Marjorie, seeing it only in the light of her own sorrow, sympathized with her mother to the full. They never spoke of Caussidière ; Marjorie knew now that the man had never really won her love, and the time of her sojourn in France was a dark chapter on which she did not care to look.

In these sad yet happy days, who could be gentler than Miss Hetherington ? The mask of her pride fell off for ever, and showed a mother's loving face, sweetened with humility and heavenly pity. She was worn and feeble, and looked very old ; but whenever Marjorie was near, she was happiness itself.

The fullest measure of her love, however, was reserved for

Marjorie's child. Little Léon had no fear of her, and soon, in his pretty broken English, learned to call her 'grand-mamma.'

'We began wi' a bar sinister,' said the lady one day as they sat together; 'but there's no blame and no shame, Marjorie, on you and yours. Your son is the heir of Annandale.'

'Oh, mother,' cried Marjorie sadly, 'how can that be? I am a mother, but no wife!'

'You're wife to yon Frenchman,' answered Miss Hetherington; 'ay, his lawful wedded wife by the English and the Scottish law. Out there in France he might reject you by the law of man; but here in Scotland you're his true wife still, though I wish, with all my heart, you were his widow instead.'

'Is that so, mother?'

'True as gospel, Marjorie. It's wi' *me* the shame lies, like the bright speck of blood on the hands o' the Thane's wife, which even the perfumes of Araby couldna cleanse awa'!'

'Don't talk of that, mother!' cried Marjorie embracing the old lady. 'I am sure you are not to blame.'

'And you can forgive me, my bonnie bairn?'

'I have nothing to forgive; you were deceived as—as I have been. Oh mother, men are wicked!—I think they have evil hearts.'

The old lady looked long and fondly in her daughter's face; then she said, with a loving smile:

'I ken one man that has the heart of a king—ay, of an angel, Marjorie.'

'Who, mother?'

'Who but Johnnie Sutherland? my blessings on the lad! But for him, I should have lost my bairn for ever, and it was for his sake, Marjorie, that I wished ye were a widow indeed!'

Marjorie flushed a deep crimson, and turned her head away. Sutherland's unswerving devotion had not failed to touch her

deeply, and she understood it now in all its passionate depth and strength ; but she still felt herself under the shadow of her old sorrow, and she knew that the tie which bound her to Caussidière could only be broken by death.

* * * * *

That very afternoon, as Marjorie was wandering in the Castle grounds, Sutherland appeared. The memory of what Miss Hetherington had said was still fresh in Marjorie's mind, and she met her old lover with a certain sad constraint.

'How is your father?' she asked gently.

'Much better. If the spring would only come, I think he would be quite well. But I wanted to speak to you about old Solomon, your foster-father. He has been stranger than ever the last few days, and has asked constantly for you.'

Solomon was dwelling quite alone in a small cottage close to the manse. He still fulfilled, but almost nominally, the duties of sexton, but he was far too old and deaf for the office of precentor, which had been given recently to a younger man. Since her return Marjorie had called on him repeatedly, but had found his manner curiously strange. His wits wandered a good deal : he talked of his old master as if he still lived, and of Marjorie as if she were still a child.

'I will go over to him now,' said Marjorie ; 'I am afraid he is fretting, Johnnie.'

'He is very old, you see,' said Sutherland ; 'but I think you are right—the appointment of the new precentor has troubled his mind. Poor old Solomon ! Why, he was an old man even when I was a child, and I don't think he can last much longer.'

They passed out of the Castle grounds, and took the path which led across the fields. A keen frost filled the air, snow covered every field and fallow, and the path beneath their feet seemed like iron ; far away over the landscape the wintry sun was hanging like a purple globe, small as a schoolboy's pink balloon. There was a strange hush in the air, a wintry stillness,

but to Marjorie's eyes the whole scene was beautiful, full of peace and rest.

They left the footpath and came to the highway. A little further on they halted on the old familiar bridge, and looked down on the waters of the Annan creeping underneath their covering of thick ice.

'Times are changed, Marjorie, since we last stood here,' said Sutherland softly. 'Do you mind that day?'

'Yes,' answered Marjorie, without lifting her eyes to his.

They wandered on towards the village, and presently reached the cottage where the old sexton was dwelling. They found Solomon seated alone by the fireside, looking white and skeletonian. He looked up with lacklustre eyes as they entered.

Marjorie put her arms around his neck, and kissed him on the cheek.

'Wha's this?' he muttered vacantly.

'It is Marjorie—Marjorie Annan.'

'Is it yoursel'? You should be awa' at the school. Wha's this wi' ye, Marjorie?'

Sutherland put his hand gently on the old man's shoulder.

'Don't you know me, Solomon?'

'What's your name, laddie?'

'John Sutherland.'

Solomon muttered to himself, then said:

'I ken your father—he's a decent man. Will ye let him speak for me till the meenister, till Mr. Lorraine?'

'Mr. Lorraine?' echoed Marjorie, her eyes full of tears; 'oh, Solomon, Mr. Lorraine is dead and in his grave.'

'Sae he is,' responded the sexton at once. 'Wha should ken better than me, that laid him in the mools? He was a good man and a grand preacher; I was his servant for thretty years, and noo they've putten me awa' and tae'n a seely clishmaclaver in my place.'

'Never mind, Solomon,' said Marjorie soothingly; 'when you are better——'

'Better! I'll ne'er be better!' cried Solomon, with something of his old stubbornness and pertinacity. 'I'm auld, lassie; auld and weak. They're telling me there's a place for me at the meenister's feet—I was his servant thretty years, and I couldna thole to be far awa'. Marjorie! Are ye Marjorie Annan?'

'Yes, Solomon.'

'I mind ye weel,' muttered Solomon; but indeed he scarcely seemed to know her, all his thoughts and perceptions being mingled in a kind of dream.

So they left him, promising to return soon again. Leaving the cottage, Marjorie strolled instinctively on to the churchyard. Sutherland followed her without a word. They paused at the church gate, and looked over at the old manse. The trees around it had been clipped and trimmed, and the walls were covered with a fresh coat of whitewash. A cry of children at play came from the garden.

Marjorie sighed, and moved on through the churchyard, leaving small footprints in the snow. Presently she paused in the shadow of the church, and stood looking at the spot where the old minister lay at rest. A plain headstone had been placed above the grave.

SACRED TO THE MEMORY

OF THE

REV. SAMPSON LORRAINE,

Thirty Years Minister of this Parish.

Then followed the dates of birth and death, and underneath were the simple words,

'Abide with me!'

As Marjorie gazed down and read the inscription, all the sweet past rose before her through a mist of tears. She was a happy child again, standing at the minister's knee: she heard

his kind voice, she felt the touch of his loving hand, and his gentle face shone upon her in a pathetic light from heaven.

'Oh, Johnnie!' she sobbed; 'if God could only give me back my foster-father and make me a child again! All I loved are being taken from me, and now I have no one left in the world but my mother and you!'

'Don't weep, Marjorie!' said Sutherland. 'While I live I shall love you and watch over you. I have loved you from the beginning—I shall love you till I die!'

Tenderly and respectfully he took her hand in his, and she did not draw it away. There was a long silence, broken only by her low sobbing. Then, conquering herself with an effort, and remembering the fatal barrier that stood between them, she released herself from his hold, and said, looking sadly up into his face:

'It is growing late; I must hasten home.'

CHAPTER XXXVII

STRANGE NEWS.

AFTER that tender scene with Marjorie, Sutherland seemed to avoid rather than seek her society. He knew that if he sought it his love would grow, and perhaps become too much for him to bear. If Marjorie had been a free woman, it would have been altogether different, but she was not, nor in the ordinary course of nature was she likely to be.

No, she must live at the Castle—a wife yet not a wife—with her little boy to console her and remind her of the chain which bound her even while she was free. And as for Sutherland, there was nothing for him but his work—no hope in the future, and only sickening reminiscences of the past—so he stayed at home.

Meantime he worked hard at his pictures, hearing occasionally from his friend, who still occupied the studio in Paris, and

who urged Sutherland to return. But this he refused to do. So long as Marjorie remained in Annandale, there would he remain also.

What if he seldom saw her, what if all his days were spent in the hardest toil?—could he not walk out when the sun had set, and evening was creeping on, and gaze upon the roof which sheltered her, the scenes where she had lingered day by day? It was poor comfort perhaps, but it was precious to him.

Thus time passed on, until the dreary desolate winter of that terrible year, so memorable to France and Frenchmen, set in with all its rigour. There was little joy for Sutherland. Indeed, his trials were becoming almost more than he could bear, and he was wondering whether or not, after all, he should leave his home and Marjorie, when there came a piece of news which fairly stunned him.

It came in the shape of a letter and a paper from his Parisian artist friend. The letter, after a few preparatory words, ran as follows :

‘ You may be shocked, but I hardly think you will be sorry to hear of the death of your little friend’s husband, Léon Caussidière. He disappeared in a most mysterious manner, and is supposed to have been privately put to death. What he was, Heaven knows! but he mixed a good deal in politics, and judging from what you told me about him, I shouldn’t be at all surprised to hear that he was a spy. Well, at any rate, whatever he was he is gone—peace be to his soul; and I fancy the world will get on a good deal better without him than with him. At any rate, a certain part of it will, I know! With this I send a paper, that you may read the official account of the death of your friend, and know that there is no mistake about it.’

Having finished the letter, Sutherland turned to the paper—glanced down its columns; came upon a marked paragraph, and read as follows in the French tongue :

'Caussidière, holding an officer's commission under the Committee of Public Safety, has been convicted of treasonable practices and put to death. He was tried by military tribunal, and executed yesterday.'

Sutherland put down the paper and held his hands to his head: he was like a man dazed. Was he glad? No, he would not allow himself to feel glad—to rejoice in the death of a fellow-creature, even though he was his enemy.

And yet if Caussidière was dead, Marjorie was free. The very thought seemed to turn his brain. He put both the letter and the paper in his pocket, and went up to his room. He could not work, but he sat down among his pictures and tried to think.

What must he do? Go to Marjorie? No, he could not do that—for she would detect the joy in his face and voice, and her sensitive nature would recoil from him, and that he could not bear. He must not see her; other lips than his must tell the news.

He remained all the morning shut up in his room, but in the afternoon he left the house, and walked slowly across the fields towards Annandale Castle.

He knew that at that hour Marjorie would be from home, wandering in the fields, perhaps, with her little boy, or visiting some of her old village friends. Feeling strong in this hope, he hurried on towards the Castle.

He found Miss Hetherington alone. She was glad to see him, but rated him soundly on what she termed his neglect.

'It's not for me to control ye if ye dinna wish to come, Johnnie Sutherland,' she said. 'You're your own maister, and ye can gang your own gait, but it's scarcely fair to Marjorie. She's lonesome, poor lassie, and she takes it ill that ye come so seldom.'

'Miss Hetherington,' returned Sutherland, 'I stayed away not because I wished, but because I took too much pleasure in coming. I love Marjorie. I've loved her ever since I was a

lad, and I shall love her till I die. I couldn't come before, knowing she had a husband ; but it's for *you* to say now whether I may come in or no.'

'For me? What do you mean, Johnnie Sutherland?'

For answer he put both the letter and paper in her hand, and bade her read. She did read; eagerly at first, but as she proceeded her hand trembled, the tears streamed from her eyes, and the paper fell from her grasp.

'God forgive me!' she cried; 'it's an evil thing to rejoice at the death of a fellow-creature, yet I canna but rejoice. He broke the heart of my poor bairn, and he tried to crush down me, but, Heaven be praised! we are both free now. Johnnie Sutherland, you say that you love her? Weel, I'm glad. You're a good lad. Comfort her if you can, and may God bless ye both!'

That very night Marjorie learned the news from Miss Hetherington. The old lady told it with a ring of joy in her voice, but Marjorie listened with a shudder. After all, the man was her husband. Despite his cruelty she had once almost loved him; and, though she could not mourn him as a widow should, she tried to respect the dead. But it was only for a while; then the cloud lifted, and she almost thanked God that she was free.

Sutherland now became a constant visitor at the Castle, and sometimes it seemed to him and to Marjorie also that their early days had returned; the same, yet not the same, for the old Castle looked bright and genial now, and it was, moreover, presided over by a bright genial mistress.

Things could not last thus for ever. Marjorie knew it; and one evening she was awakened from her strange dream.

She had been out during the afternoon with her little boy, and as they were walking back towards the Castle they were joined by Sutherland. For a time the three remained walking together, little Léon clinging on to Sutherland's hand; but after a while the child ran on to pluck some flowers, and left the two together.

'How he loves you!' said Marjorie, noting the child's backward glance; 'I don't think he will ever forget the ride you gave him on the roundabouts at the Champs d'Elysée—you were very kind to him; you were very kind to us both.'

She paused, but he said nothing; presently she raised her eyes, and she saw that he was looking fixedly at her. She blushed and turned her head aside, but he gained possession of her hand.

'Marjorie,' he said, 'you know why I was kind to you, do you not?—it was because I loved you, Marjorie. I love you *now*—I shall always love you; tell me, will you some day be my wife?'

The word was spoken, either for good or evil, and he stood like a man awaiting his death sentence. For a time she did not answer; when she turned her face towards him, it was quite calm.

'Have you thought well?' she said. 'I am not what I was. I am almost an old woman now, and there is my boy.'

'Let him be my boy, Marjorie; do not say "No"!'

She turned towards him and put both her hands in his.

'I say "Yes,"' she answered, 'with all my heart, but not yet—not yet!'

Later on that evening, when little Léon lay peacefully sleeping in his cot, and Miss Hetherington was dozing in her easy-chair, Marjorie, creeping from the house, walked in the Castle grounds to think over her new-found happiness alone. Was it all real, she asked herself, or only a dream? Could it be true that she, after all her troubles, would find so much peace? It seemed strange, yet it must be true. Yes, she was free at last.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

IS RETROSPECTIVE.

WAS Caussidière then departed from this life? To understand the truth, we must change the scene for a short space from the green uplands and heathery mountains of Annandale back to the streets of the French imperial city.

Since the personages of our drama were last seen moving there, what changes have taken place! The Germans, who were then advancing, have come and gone; the dismal episode of the great siege is over; civil strife and counter strife have supervened; and now the proud city, which the Emperor beautified and prostituted, lies trembling at the feet of the Commune! Revolution upon revolution; change upon change; the spectre of a great national terror, ever shifting its lineaments, followed one horrible experience with another.

The streets were alive with the hungry, cruel faces of women and men; the great houses of the wealthy were closed, their owners flown for safety to more peaceful regions; the Tuileries was in ruins; the fierce howling mob surged this way and that way like a troubled sea. Men who were beggars yesterday ruled in the high places. No priest dared show his face abroad. It was the epoch of massacre and civil war; it was the coming triumph of the *pétroleuse*.

Meantime Caussidière was jubilant. He was a great man at last, and high in favour with the leaders of the Commune. He went to and fro proudly, in a curious uniform, composed of a soldier's coat and epaulettes and a civilian's trousers. He was one of the heroes of the hour.

But the stormy stress of civil war and the claims of country did not occupy the whole of our good patriot's time, or fill the complete measure of his aspiring soul. He was a follower of Venus as well as Mars, and as constant as ever in his attendance on Mademoiselle Séraphine, of the Châtelet. Indeed, at the

very moment we encounter him again, he is victorious in love, having finally persuaded Séraphine to marry him by civil contract, according to the laws of France.

It was a very quiet affair, this marriage. One morning Caussidière dressed himself in martial array, fixed a white rosette on the lapet of his coat, and drove in a hired fly, with the patriot Huet at his side, to the office of the arrondissement, where Séraphine was waiting with her friends. The ceremony was soon performed. Waiting on the pavement to see the bridal party emerge was a motley crowd of the unwashed: haggard men, ragged women, and street *gamins*.

'Three cheers for Caussidière!' croaked an old woman, as that worthy emerged with his bride upon his arm.

The mob emitted a feeble cheer. Caussidière, with all his honours upon him, took off his hat with a patronizing smile and bowed graciously.

At this moment a woman, shabbily dressed, stepped forward and touched the bridegroom on the shoulder.

'Ah, Adèle!' he exclaimed, recognising her at a glance.

Adèle fixed her wild black eyes upon his face, frowning darkly.

'So it has come to this!' she cried. 'You have thrown away the poor foreign girl and her child and taken another wife!'

'What are you talking about? Bah! stand aside!'

But Adèle set her lips firmly and blocked the way.

'You have betrayed her, as you would betray all of us—your country and your friends as well; but I warn you to take care. The time is near when you will be betrayed in turn, and then——'

Here Séraphine, who had been listening impatiently, broke in. She was resplendently attired in white satin, with a charming bonnet fresh from the *modiste*, and with jewels upon her person, gold upon her wrists.

'Who is this creature?' she exclaimed. 'What does she want?'

Adèle turned sharply upon the speaker and eyed her contemptuously from head to foot.

'Who is she?' she echoed in a shrill voice. She is Adèle Lambert of the *Mouche d'Or*, and she knows *you* as well as she knows your *lâche* of a lover. You are Séraphine of the Chatelet, who take no pay from the manager, because you sell yourself for a napoleon to the first that comes. And Caussidière has bought you now to play this farce of a wedding! A fine bridegroom—a fine bride! But the bridegroom is a traitor, and the bride is a ——.'

'Come, come, Adèle!' cried the herculean Huet, interrupting her. 'You've been having a glass too much, and don't know what you're saying.'

Without heeding the interruption, Adèle continued to regard the actress with savage contempt; then, turning suddenly to the crowd and laughing fiercely, she harangued them as follows:

'Look at her, citizens! Look at them both! While you go ragged such people as this must wear fine clothes and jewels; while you starve, while you have not even bread, they eat of the best; while you have only muddy Seine water to drink, they must drink champagne. Look at the woman in her fine robes; look at the jewels in her breast, the rings on her hands. We all know how she earned them, citizens! When the Germans were here it was such women as these who welcomed them, who became their mistresses and took their gold, while the people were starving and dying! It would be a good deed to tear them limb from limb!'

A low ominous roar, like the growl of a wild beast, showed that this harangue was not without effect. The crowd was increasing, swelled by many passers-by.

'The devil!' muttered Huet. 'Rush on to the carriage!'

But Adèle still blocked the way with increasing fury.

'And if the woman is what I have said, the man is worse. He calls himself a good patriot, but he has betrayed women,

and would betray the city. *I* hate him, citizens. I have good reason to hate him. He is no better than his mistress, the *cocotte* !

Another ominous roar from the crowd, only too glad of an excuse for tumult and violence. Seeing that every moment increased the danger, the wedding party moved towards the carriage, which was waiting at the kerbstone. Flinging his powerful arms round Adèle, Huet held her, while Caussidière assisted Séraphine to her seat ; then he sprang after them, and cried to the driver to hurry his horses on.

Freed from his hold, Adèle screamed violently, and, surrounded by the shrieking crowd, rushed at the carriage. But it was too late ; the carriage moved away, parting the mob on either side. Then, grown frantic without knowing why, the people groped for stones and hurled them after the bridal party. Some of the women seized up mud and flung it at the occupants of the carriage. Caussidière's beautiful uniform was bespattered, and one large handful of dirt striking Séraphine in the face, completed the pretty lady's terror and caused her to faint away.

Once out of the street they were in safety, for the mob was only half in earnest, and did not attempt to follow far.

A few hours later Caussidière and his bride were seated alone together in the gilded *salon* of a well-furnished 'apartment' which the bridegroom had prepared for his bride. The table was spread with the *débris* of a first-class dinner, supplied from an adjoining restaurant.

But the fair lady of the Chatelet was in her least amiable mood. The episode after the wedding had completely upset her, and she had been pouting and showing her white teeth ever since, without a smile or a pleasant word for any one, even the bridegroom of her choice.

'My dear Séraphine,' said Caussidière, bending over her and offering to embrace her, 'this is the happiest day of my life !'

'Nonsense,' returned the bride. 'I'm sure it's the most miserable day of mine.'

'Don't say that, *cherie* !'

'I do say it !'

'But you don't mean it !'

'But yes, yes, yes ! Go away ! Don't touch me—I detest you !'

And she shook herself free from his embrace and threw herself upon a *settee* on the other side of the room.

Caussidière bit his lips, and tried to force his features into a smile ; but his efforts were futile, and the shadow of a forbidding scowl darkened his countenance.

'It is that infernal woman,' he cried. 'A she-devil. But surely you do not mind her in the least ?'

'I do mind her !' returned Séraphine, whimpering hysterically. 'To think of such a thing happening on such a day ! I was a fool to marry you ! The woman was right—you have a wife already.'

'I have no wife, Séraphine !'

'It is the same thing, and you have behaved abominably. A pretty mess I have made of it—I, who could have married so well.'

'Bah !' exclaimed Caussidière, losing patience.

'That's right, behave to me as you have behaved to her, brigand. But if you think I am going to live with you, you are mistaken ; I would rather die.'

And Séraphine rose impatiently, and moved towards the door.

Caussidière went livid. He, too, was upset by the events of the day, and all his angry passions were aroused. He stood before the door, and blocked the way.

'Let me pass !' cried the actress.

'I shall do nothing of the kind. Sit down !'

'I tell you I will not stay here !'

'But you shall !'

And he took her forcibly but gently by the arms and pushed her into a chair.

'It is too late to show off your fine airs, Madame Caussidière. I have taken you, and I mean to keep you. *Diable!* What are you, to reproach *me*? Do you think I married you with my eyes shut, not knowing what you were? No, Adèle was right; you have taken presents from many men, but now you have sold yourself to me.'

'I tell you I hate you, Caussidière!'

The Frenchman was about to make an angry retort, when there was a tramp of feet on the stairs without, followed by a loud knock at the door.

'Open!' cried a voice; then, without more ado, the door was flung open, and a man in uniform appeared on the threshold.

'Citizen Caussidière.'

'Well?'

'You are wanted at headquarters. Follow me!'

Caussidière started in surprise, for behind the speaker stood two armed men blocking up the lobby.

'I cannot come to-night. *Diable!* do you not know it is my marriage day? I will attend to-morrow.'

'You must accompany me *now*, citizen, otherwise I shall have to arrest you.'

Caussidière recoiled in consternation.

'Arrest me? *Me*? Do you know who I am?'

'That is not my affair, citizen. Will you come quietly, or——'

As he spoke the man advanced threateningly.

'Your authority!' gasped Caussidière.

'My authority is the Commune.'

Seeing that it was useless to resist, Caussidière attempted to put a good face on the affair. Smiling nervously, he turned to Séraphine.

'Do not distress yourself. It is doubtless some affair of

importance, in which my services are wanted; and I shall return to you directly. *Au revoir*, my Séraphine.'

He stooped to kiss her, but she turned her head pettishly away. Then, shrugging his shoulders and putting on his hat jauntily, he passed out of the door and down the stairs, escorted by the officer and soldiers. When he had gone, Séraphine sat down for some time, sobbing hysterically. At last she composed herself, rose, and looked in the large mirror which stood over the mantelpiece. Her pretty face was swollen with weeping, and her fair hair seemed more faded and colourless than ever.

'What a fright I look!' she murmured.

But feeling in her pocket, she found a rouge-box and a powder-box, by the aid of which she soon restored her complexion to its normal beauty. Then she paced eagerly up and down the room, pausing every now and then as if to listen for an approaching footstep.

'Shall I wait till he returns? or shall I go?'

She walked to the table, poured herself out a glass of champagne, and drank it off. The draught seemed to give her new life and decision.

'After all, all has happened for the best! I should never have remained with him long.'

So saying, she put on her bonnet and cloak and drew on her gloves. Then a thought seemed to strike her. She ran into the adjoining bedroom and opened the drawers one by one. There was little to reward her search till she came to one drawer which was locked. With a wrench she forced it open.

She uttered a cry of delight.

Within it were bank-notes and a number of gold pieces, together with some loose memoranda and letters. She gathered up all together and thrust them into a small handbag which she carried.

'After all, he is my husband,' she cried with a wicked laugh; 'and to take from one's husband is no robbery.'

A few minutes later she stealthily left the apartments, crept down the stairs, and out into the silent streets.

The bridal night passed slowly away. The wax lights on the wedding table slowly consumed themselves, the rooms remained silent and tenantless, and when the faint light of dawn crept in through the muslin curtains covering the window pane, the bride was soundly reposing in a distant part of the city, and the bridegroom had not returned.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

A DISMAL EXPERIENCE.

WHILE the lights were burning out in the empty marriage-chamber, Caussidière was pacing impatiently up and down a dismal chamber, or guard-room, attached to the headquarters of the Commune. On leaving his lodgings with his military escort he had been conducted thither, and then, with little or no ceremony, left alone, with the abrupt intimation that he would presently be summoned before the authorities.

From every side—from without the door, from beneath the iron-barred window, from the stone quadrangles beyond—came the measured tramp of sentinels, and from time to time the cry of voices, the clang of arms. Save for these sounds the place was quite silent. An oil lamp hung from the ceiling of the room, emitting a gloomy light. Nothing could have been more cheerless, more disgusting, than the place and its surroundings.

A pleasant experience, truly, for a man upon his wedding night! The bridegroom cursed his stars till he was tired of cursing; then threw himself on a bench and gloomily cogitated. His eye kindled, and his whole frame trembled with impatience, as he thought of *Séraphine*. He was eager to return to her, to embrace her, to coax away her ill-humour. *Diable!* To have the cup snatched from his grasp, just as he was about to take so full a draught of happiness, was simply maddening.

Hours passed thus. At last the door opened, and the same officer who had arrested him appeared and beckoned.

‘Come this way,’ he said.

Caussidière rose, stretched himself with assumed *sang froid*, and obeyed.

Preceded by his captor, and followed by two soldiers, he walked along through a labyrinth of dull passages, till he came to an open door.

The officer knocked respectfully.

‘Come in,’ said a voice.

The door opened, and Caussidière found himself in a large chamber, where several men in nondescript costumes—some quasi-military, others civilian—sat at a long table, with papers before them. At either end of the table stood an armed soldier.

The leading figure of the group was a fierce-looking little man, with a bald head and large dyed moustache of purple blackness. He wore a military frock-coat, and on the table before him was a cocked hat and a sword in its scabbard, lying as if just cast there by the owner’s hand.

‘Citizen Caussidière,’ said this worthy, fixing his bloodshot black eyes on the prisoner.

‘That is I,’ cried Caussidière. ‘As a faithful servant and officer of the Commune, I demand to know why I am under arrest.’

‘Stand forward,’ was the sharp reply, ‘and hold your tongue.’

There was a pause. The little man turned over the papers before him, and then conversed in whispers with his colleagues. At last he spoke again:

‘You say you are a faithful servant, Citizen Caussidière?’

Caussidière bowed.

‘Nevertheless, it is reported to us that you are in communication with the enemies of the Commune, that you have supplied them with information of our strength and position, and that for these services you have received certain sums of money—that, in one word, you are a spy.’

Caussidière started and turned white as death ; then, recovering his self-control with a mighty effort, he cried :

‘It is false ! It is infamously false !—Citizen, on my life——’

‘Silence,’ cried the little man, holding up his hand.

‘I cannot be silent, citizen. I demand justice. I have been dragged here like a criminal on the very night of my marriage ; I have left my bride weeping, wondering, and in despair ; and all, believe me, to answer some preposterous charge which I can dispel with a breath. Let me go to-night, in God’s name. To-morrow I will report myself, and answer what questions you choose.’

The men at the table whispered together again ; then the spokesman proceeded :

‘It is impossible. The charge against you is too grave. If what you say is true, so much the better for you, citizen ; but unfortunately the proofs are forthcoming, and are black against you. You know the penalty of treason ? If we discover that you are guilty, you will go to join the majority within twenty-four hours.’

‘But I am not guilty,’ gasped Caussidière. ‘I demand your proofs. Who is my accuser ?’

The leader made a sign with his head, and the next moment Caussidière found himself confronted with Adèle.

‘That woman ! That infamous one ! Citizens, you will never listen to such a creature.’

‘On the contrary, we have already listened. Citizeness, is this the man ?’

‘Yes,’ answered Adèle, in a loud voice.

‘You accuse him of communicating with the leaders at Versailles ?’

‘Yes.’

‘You have watched him, and you have seen him while on military duty at the barrier send secret messages by the spies of the enemy ?’

‘Yes.’

'It is a lie,' cried Caussidière. 'This woman is my enemy; she would swear anything to cause my destruction.'

'I have sworn the truth,' said Adèle firmly, 'and I am ready to stand by it.' And she added in a low voice, so that only the prisoner would hear: 'I told you that the poor English lady and the child should be avenged, and—you see!'

'Caussidière,' said the little man sternly.

'Yes, citizen.'

'Look at that pocket-book. Is it yours?'

Trembling violently, Caussidière took the book, and turned over the leaves. The sweat stood in beaded drops upon his brow, and he seemed about to fall.

'Yes!—no!' he murmured. 'I cannot tell.'

The members of the tribunal looked significantly at each other.

'Perhaps you know your own handwriting,' said the leader with a dark smile. 'Do you identify it? or do you deny it?'

Caussidière tried in vain to speak; his parched tongue clove to the roof of his mouth, and he gazed round in despair, like a beast at bay.

'That pocket-book contains memoranda of our secret movements, our numbers, our military arrangements. It contains also plans of our military divisions and sketches of our fortifications. It is for you to show with what object you kept such a record, and for what purpose it has been used.'

'I can explain, citizen; I can explain!'

'You will have an opportunity of doing so later on; in the meantime, is it, or is it not, your handwriting?'

'I cannot tell! It may be a forgery, for all I know!'

A murmur ran along the table. The leader smiled again more sardonically.

'You must be aware, citizen, whether or not you ever possessed such a pocket-book. Be good enough not to trouble us with prevarications which will not serve you in any way, and

may incense your judges against you. In the meantime you are under arrest. Remove the prisoner !

The officer stepped forward and touched him on the shoulder. Simultaneously the leader handed the officer a paper on which he had been hastily writing.

Caussidière staggered forward to the table.

‘Listen to me, I beseech you !’ he cried. ‘I am innocent !’

‘That remains to be seen. Remove him !’

‘Where am I to be taken ?’

‘To prison, Caussidière ; to-morrow you will receive your sentence.’

Caussidière would have continued his appeal, but the soldier, stepping forward, drew him unceremoniously to the door. As he passed by Adèle, she bent towards him with a look of malignant delight, and whispered :

‘*Au revoir*, Caussidière ! I congratulate you on the beginning of your honeymoon.’

Then, before he could answer or hear another word, the prisoner was unceremoniously hurried away. Half an hour later he was cooling his heels in a prison cell, where he was left in almost total darkness ; and at the very moment when Séraphine had placed his money and jewels under her pillow and gone comfortably to sleep, he was hiding his face in his hands and moaning in mad despair.

CHAPTER XL

RESURGAM.

AFTER the confession of her love for Sutherland, and the promise his love had wrung from her trembling lips, Marjorie was not a little troubled.

Again and again she reproached herself for want of fidelity to Caussidière’s memory, for she was tender-hearted, and could not readily forget what the man had once been to her. Infinite

is the capacity for forgiveness implanted in the heart of a loving woman, and now that Caussidière had gone to his last account, a deep and sacred pity took possession of his victim's heart.

Sutherland saw the signs of change with some anxiety, but had sufficient wisdom to wait until time should complete its work and efface the Frenchman's memory for ever from Marjorie's mind. When they met he spoke little to her of love, or of the tender hope which bound them together; his talk was rather of the old childish days, when they were all in all to one another; of old friends and old recollections, such as sweeten life. He was very gentle and respectful to her; only showing in his eyes the constancy of his tender devotion, never harshly expressing it in passionate words.

But if Sutherland was patient and self-contained, it was far different with the impulsive lady of the Castle. No sooner was she made aware of the true state of affairs than she was anxious that the marriage should take place at once.

'I am an old woman now, Marjorie,' she cried, 'and the days o' my life are numbered. Before I gang awa' let me see you a happy bride—let me be sure you have a friend and protector while I'm asleep among the mools.'

She was sitting in her boudoir in her great arm-chair, looking haggard and old indeed. The fire in her black eyes had faded away, giving place to a dreamy and wistful pity; but now and again, as on the present occasion, it flashed up like the gleam upon the blackening brand. Marjorie, who was seated sewing by her mother's side, sadly shook her head.

'I cannot think of it yet,' she replied. 'I feel it would be sacrilege.'

'Sacrilege, say you?' returned Miss Hetherington. 'The sacrilege was wi' yon Frenchman, when he beguiled you awa', and poisoned your young life, my bairn. You owed him no duty living, and you owe him none dead. He was an ill limmer, and thank God he's in his grave.'

'Ah, do not speak ill of him now. If he has sinned he has been punished. To die—so young.'

And Marjorie's gentle eyes filled with tears.

'If he wasna ripe, do you think he would be gathered?' exclaimed Miss Hetherington, with something of her old fierceness of manner. 'My certie, he was ripe—and rotten; Lord forgive me for miscalling the dead! But, Marjorie, my bairn, you're o'er tender-hearted. Forget the past! Forget everything but the happy future that lies before you! Think you're just a young lass marrying for the first time, and marrying as good a lad as ever wore shoon north o' the Tweed.'

Marjorie rose from her seat, and walking to the window, looked dreamily down at the Castle garden, still tangled as a maze and overgrown with weeds. As she did so, she heard a child's voice, calling in French:

'Maman ! maman !'

It was little Léon, playing in the old garden, attended by a Scottish serving-maid, who had been taken on as nurse. He saw Marjorie looking down, and looking up with a face bright as sunshine, waved his hands to her in delight.

'How can I think as you say,' she said, glancing round at her mother, 'when I have my boy to remind me every day that I am a widow? After all, he is my husband's child—a gift that makes amends for all my sorrow.'

As she spoke she kissed her hand fondly to the child, and looked down at him through streaming tears of love.

'Weel, weel,' said the old lady soothingly; 'I'm no saying but that it's weel to forget and forgi'a. Only your life must not be wasted, Marjorie! I must see you settled down before I gang.'

'You will not leave me, dear mother!' answered Marjorie, returning to her side and bending over her. 'No, no; you are well and strong.'

'What's that the old sang says?' returned Miss Hetherington, smoothing the girl's hair with her wrinkled hand, as she repeated thoughtfully;

"I hear a voice you cannot hear,
That says I must not stay ;
I see a hand you cannot see,
That beckons me away !"

That's it, Marjorie ! I'm an old woman now—old before my time. God has been kind to me, far kinder than I deserve; but the grass will soon be green on my grave in the kirkyard. Let me sleep in peace ! Marry Johnnie Sutherland wi' my blessing, and I shall ken you will never want a friend.'

Such tender reasoning had its weight with Marjorie, but it failed to conquer her scruples altogether. She still remained in the shadow of her former sorrow, fearful and ashamed to pass, as she could have done at one step, into the full sunshine of the newer and brighter life.

So the days passed on, till at last there occurred an event so strange, so unexpected, and spirit-compelling, that it threatened for a time to drive our heroine into madness and despair.

One summer afternoon, Marjorie, accompanied by little Léon, met Sutherland in the village, and walked with him to Solomon's cottage. They found the old man in the garden, looking unusually bright and hale ; but his talk was still confused : he mingled the present with the past, and continued to speak of Marjorie, and to address her, as if she were still a child.

The sun was setting when they left him, turning their steps towards Annandale Castle. They lingered slowly along the road, talking of indifferent things, and sweetly happy in each other's society, till it was growing dark.

Then Marjorie held out her hand.

'Let me go with you to the Castle gate,' said Sutherland eagerly.

'Not to-night,' answered Marjorie. 'Pray let me walk alone, with only little Léon.'

Very unwillingly he acquiesced, and suffered her to depart. He watched her sadly till her figure disappeared in the darkness, moving towards the lonely bridge across the Annan.

Having wished Sutherland good-night, Marjorie took the child by the hand and walked back across the meadows towards the Castle. It was a peaceful gloaming; the stars were shining brightly, the air was balmy; so she sauntered along, thinking dreamily of the past.

She walked up by the bridge, and looked down at Annan Water, flowing peacefully onward.

As she looked she mused. Her life had begun with trouble, but surely all that was over now. Her days in Paris seemed to be fading rapidly into the dimness of the past; there was a broken link in her chain of experience, that was all. Yes, she would forget it, and remember only the days which she had passed at Annandale.

And yet, how could she do so? There was the child, little Léon, who looked at her with his father's eyes, and spoke his childish prattle in tones so like those of the dead man, that they sometimes made her shudder. She lifted the boy in her arms.

'Léon,' she said; 'do you remember Paris, my child—do you remember your father?'

The child looked at her, and half shrank back in fear. How changed she had become! Her cheeks were burning feverishly, her eyes sparkling.

'Mamma,' said the boy, half drawing from her; 'what is the matter?'

'Nothing, darling,' she said.

She pressed him fondly to her, and set him again upon the ground. They walked on a few steps further, when she paused again, sat down upon the grass, and took the boy upon her knee.

'Léon,' she said, patting his cheek, and smoothing back his hair. 'You love Annandale, do you not?'

'Yes, mamma, and grandmamma, and Mr. Sutherland.'

'And—and you would be able to forget the dreadful time we spent in Paris?'

'And papa?'

‘My darling, your father is dead!’

She pressed the child to her again; raised her eyes, and looked straight into the face of her husband.

Caussidière!

It was indeed he, or his spirit, standing there in the starlight, with his pale face turned towards her, his eyes looking straight into hers. For a moment they looked upon one another—he made a movement towards her, when, with a wild cry, Marjorie clasped her child still more closely to her, and sank back swooning upon the ground.

When she recovered her senses she was still lying where she had fallen; the child was kneeling beside her, crying bitterly, and Caussidière, the man, and not his spirit, was bending above her. When she opened her eyes, he smiled, and took her hand.

‘It is I, little one,’ he said. ‘Do not be afraid!’

With a shudder she withdrew her hand, and rose to her feet and faced him.

‘You!’ she exclaimed; ‘I thought you were dead!’

Caussidière shrugged his shoulders.

‘Truly,’ he said; ‘and you rejoice to find that I still live; is it not so, Marjorie?’

She did not answer him; her very blood seemed to be freezing in her veins, and her face wore such an expression of horror, that for a moment even he was rendered dumb. Poor Marjorie seemed to be looking again upon black despair. Where was all her dream of happiness now? Gone, all gone with the re-appearance of *his* face.

‘Marjorie,’ he said, ‘let me hear your words of welcome! I am an exile now, driven to seek refuge in Scotland, to escape the bullets of my foes.’

‘Why—why have you come to me?’

‘I have come to you for comfort. I have come to take you with me to share my English home!’

‘To share your home!’ echoed Marjorie. ‘I will not—no, never. You have done me evil enough already—but I am free, I knew you now, and I will not go with you!’

For a moment this firm revolt nonplussed him, but he had the trump card in his own hand ; therefore he could afford to smile.

'You are free !' he said. 'What do you mean by that, *mon amie* ?'

'I mean,' said Marjorie, 'that you are nothing to me. You have said so, and I know it, and I wish never to see your face again.'

'Possibly, but our wishes are not always gratified. I am sorry you cannot give me a better welcome, since you will see me not once, but many times ; as to being free, that is all nonsense. We are in Scotland now, remember ; and you—why, you are my wife.'

'Your wife !'

'Yes, my wife !—and now, *chérie*—although I could use force if I chose, I have no wish to do so. I ask you merely to fulfil your duty and come with me to my home.'

For a moment Marjorie gave no answer ; what could she say or do ? No need for him to tell her she was in his power, she knew it only too well. While in France he had the power of turning her from his door, and heaping ignominy not only upon herself but upon her child, in her own country his power was absolute over them both.

With a wild cry she threw up her hands and cried on God for help and comfort, but no answer came ; it seemed that for her there was no help in all the world.

CHAPTER XLI.

FATHER AND CHILD.

'*Chérie*, am I forgiven ?' said Caussidière, again holding forth his hands.

The sound of his voice recalled her to herself. She shrank away from him in positive terror.

'Keep back,' she cried ; 'don't touch me.'

'What do you mean ?'

'I mean that I hate and fear you ! Wife or no wife, I will never live with you again—never, never !'

Confident of his own power, Causidière never winced. He had expected something of this kind, and was not wholly unprepared for it. He said nothing, but quietly watching his opportunity, he lifted the child in his arms. Finding himself thus suddenly and roughly seized from his mother's side, Léon screamed wildly, but Caussidière shook him, and bade him be at peace.

'That is what your mother has taught you, to scream at the sight of your father. Now *I* will teach you otherwise.'

He held the child firmly in his arms, and it was well for him that he did so, for Marjorie sprang forward and seized him.

'Give him to me,' she cried ; 'give me my child !'

'*Your* child,' returned Caussidière with a sneer ; 'the child is mine. I have a right to take him, and to keep him too, and that is what I mean to do !'

'To keep him !' cried Marjorie ; 'you would never do that ; you do not want him if you do not care for him ; and he is all I have in the world.'

'But I mean to keep him all the same !'

'You shall not ; you dare not ; you shall kill me before you take my boy. Léon, my darling, come to me ; come to your mother !'

She stretched forth her arms to take the child, when Causidière, livid with passion, raised his hand and struck her in the face. She staggered back, then with a cry she fell senseless to the ground.

When she opened her eyes it was quite dark all about her, and as quiet as the grave.

'Léon,' she moaned feebly, but no answer came.

She sat up, pressing her hands tightly upon her head, for she was still stupid from the blow, and hardly seemed to realize

what had taken place. She felt faint and sick, and when she rose to her feet she was so weak she could hardly stand.

Gradually the dizziness passed away; she remembered all that had occurred, and with a low moan she sank again upon the ground, crying bitterly.

But soon her sobs abated, and impatiently brushing away her tears, she set herself to wonder again what she must do. On one thing she was determined, to be with her child. Yes; at any cost they must be together.

For herself she had little to fear. What further harm could possibly happen to her? He had dragged her down. He had made her pass through every kind of humiliation it was possible for a woman to endure. No, she could not shake off the degraded shame which oppressed her; but she could save her child. Little Léon, whom she had nursed so tenderly, and kept ignorant of every sin, to be so cruelly torn from her! Heaven help him if he was left to the tender mercies of his father!

She rose to her feet again, and staggered on towards the Castle. Her scalding tears fell fast, her breast was rent with sobs; and for the first time in her life she began to question the beneficence of the Divine Father, whom she had been taught from her childhood to revere. It seemed to her that her trouble far exceeded her offence. If she had sinned, surely she had suffered, and she might now be permitted to rest in peace.

But for her it seemed there was no peace, and, but for Léon's sake, she would have wished to die.

It was late when she reached the Castle. Miss Hetherington, having grown fearful at her long absence, rushed forward to meet her; then with a cry she shrank away.

'Marjorie,' she exclaimed, 'what's wrong, and—and where's the bairn?'

At the mention of Léon, Marjorie wrung her hands.

'He has come back and taken him from me!'

She looked so wild and sad that the old lady thought her reason was going. Her face was white as death, and there was

a red mark on her forehead where the man had struck her. Miss Hetherington took her hands and soothed her gently; when she saw that her calmness was returning to her she said:

‘Now, Marjorie, my bairn, tell me all about it!’

And Marjorie told, trembling and crying meanwhile, and imploring Miss Hetherington to recover her child.

The old lady listened with apparent self-command, though in reality she was as much disturbed as Marjorie. She felt that the Frenchman’s resuscitation and return meant more than was at that time apparent. Caussidière had always had a set purpose in view, and she knew well that his plans had never included much happiness for her or hers; there was clearly some evil pending: she must think out the best means of meeting him in his own way.

But of all this she said nothing to Marjorie.

‘Dinna fret, Marjorie,’ she said, patting the girl on the head; ‘there’s nothing to fear. The man’s a knave, we ken, but he’s a fool as weel. Bring harm to his own bairn, not he!—he’s o’er sharp to put himself into the power o’ the English law! ’Tis the siller he wants, and ’tis the siller he means to get!’

‘But what shall we do?’ sobbed Marjorie.

‘Do?—nothing. Bide quiet a while, and *he’ll* do something, mark *me!*’

‘But Léon—what will become of Léon?’

‘Dinna greet for the bairn; I tell ye he’s safe enough; after all, he’s with his father.’

‘But he mustn’t stop; I must get him back, or it will kill me.’

‘You shall have him back, never fear, Marjorie.’

‘But to-night—what can be done to-night?’

‘Nothing, my lassie—absolutely nothing. Get you to bed and rest you, and to-morrow I’ll tell you what we must do.’

After a good deal more persuasion Marjorie was induced to go to her room; but during the whole of that night she never closed her eyes, but walked about in wild unrest.

When the dawn broke she descended the stairs, and to her

amazement found Miss Hetherington in the dining-room, just as she had left her on the preceding night. The weary hours of vigil had done their work; her face, always white, was positively corpse-like; her thin grey hairs were dishevelled, and her eyes were dim. With a piercing cry Marjorie ran forward and fell at her feet.

'Mother!' she cried; 'dear mother, what is the matter?'

The old woman laid her trembling hand upon Marjorie's brown head and smiled.

'Tis nothing, my child,' she said. 'The hours of the night have passed o'er quickly for me, you see, for I sat thinking, and now you see the dawn has come. . . . Marjorie, my poor Marjorie! I wonder you can ever find it in your heart to call me mother!—see what sorrow has come to you through me.'

'Through you? Oh, no, no!'

'Ay; but 'tis so, Marjorie. "The sins of the fathers shall be visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generation;" through my sin you suffer.'

'Do not say that—it is not true.'

'Ay, but it is true. Through my sin you were made a poor outcast, with no mother to watch over you, no kind hand to guide you. When I think on it, it breaks my heart, Marjorie—it breaks my heart.'

* * * * *

About ten o'clock that morning a messenger came to the Castle bringing a note for Marjorie. It was from Caussidière, and dated from Dumfries.

'I am here,' he wrote, 'with the child. Do you propose to join me, as I can force you to do if I choose, or am I to keep the child only? I might be induced to yield him up to you upon certain conditions. Let me know what you mean to do, as my stay here will not be of long duration, and I am making arrangements to take Léon away with me.

'Your husband,

'LÉON CAUSSIDIÈRE.'

Marjorie's first impulse was to rush to the place where she knew her child to be ; but Miss Hetherington restrained her.

'Bide a wee, Marjorie,' she said ; ' we'll get the bairn and not lose *you*.'

She dismissed Caussidière's messenger, and sent her own servant for Sutherland.

When the young man arrived, she saw him alone, told him in a few words what had occurred, and put Caussidière's letter in his hand.

'Bring back the child, Johnnie Sutherland,' she said, ' even if you half kill the father.'

Sutherland took the letter, and, with these instructions ringing in his ears, went to Dumfries to seek Caussidière at the place mentioned. He was like a man demented ; the blow had been so sudden that he hardly realized as yet what it all meant : he only knew that he had fallen from the brightest hope to the blackest despair, and that henceforth he must endure a living death. But this was no time to think of himself. He owed a duty to Marjorie ; he must bring her back her child.

The house he sought was a small inn in one of the bye-streets of Dumfries, and Sutherland knew it well. He entered the place, found a shock-headed servant-girl in the passage, and asked for the 'French gentleman who was staying in the house.'

'You'll find him ben yonder,' said the girl, pointing to a door on the ground-floor.

Sutherland beckoned to her to open the door ; she did so. He entered the room, and closed the door behind him.

Caussidière leapt to his feet with an oath. Léon, who had been sitting pale and tremulous in a corner, rushed forward with a cry of joy. But before he could reach Sutherland's side his father clutched him and drew him back, grasping the child so roughly as to make him moan with pain.

Then, white and furious, Caussidière faced Sutherland.

'So, it is *you* !' he exclaimed. 'How dare you intrude here ? Leave this room !'

Sutherland, who had placed his back to the door and put the key in his pocket, made no attempt to move. He was able to keep his self-control, but his face was white as death.

‘Monsieur Caussidière,’ he said, ‘I have come for that child!’

‘Really,’ said Caussidière, with a sneer; ‘then perhaps you will tell me what you propose to offer for him? Madame Caussidière must pay dearly for having made you her messenger.’

‘She will pay nothing.’

‘What do you mean, monsieur?’

‘What I say. I mean to take that child and give you nothing for him. You have come to the end of your tether, Monsieur Caussidière. You will find this time you haven’t got a helpless woman to deal with!’

Caussidière looked at him with a new light in his eyes. What did it mean? Had the man really power? and if so, to what extent? A little reflection assured him that his momentary fear was groundless. Sutherland might talk as he chose; Caussidière was master of the situation, since with him lay all the authority of the law.

‘Monsieur,’ he said, ‘you are an admirable champion. I congratulate madame on having secured you. But pray tell her from me that her child remains with her husband, not her lover.’

In a moment Sutherland had caught him by the throat.

‘Scoundrel!’ he cried.

‘Let me go,’ hissed Caussidière. ‘If you have taken my wife for your mistress you shall not bully me!’

But he said no more. Grasping him more firmly by the throat, Sutherland shook him till he could scarcely breathe; then lifting him, he dashed him violently to the ground; then, without waiting to see what he had done, he lifted the frightened child in his arms and hurried from the place.

CHAPTER XLII.

NEMESIS.

By what train of circumstances had the dead Caussidière again become quick, or rather, to express it in correcter terms, how had the Frenchman escaped from the perils and the pains of death ?

The answer is simple enough. Among the patriots of the Parisian Commune there were two Caussidières, in no way related to each other, but equally doubtful in their conduct and their antecedents ; and it happened, curiously enough, that our Caussidière's *alter ego* had also been arrested for treasonable practices.

The Paris of those days has been compared to Pandemonium ; everything was one wild frenzy of hurried and aimless hate ; and the newspaper reports, like the events they chronicled, being chaotic and irresponsible, it happened that the fate of one individual was confused with the fate of the other. At the very moment that one Caussidière was lying dead before the soldiers of the Commune, the other was escaping in disguise towards the Belgian coast, whence, after divers vicissitudes, he sailed for England, to reappear finally in Annandale, like a ghost from the grave, as we have seen.

It would have fared ill with Caussidière had it not been for the good offices of his old comrade Huet, who, by dint of unlimited swagger and a certain bulldog courage which he in reality possessed, had risen to a position of importance in the councils of the reigning party. If the truth must be told, he would have left the prisoner to his fate, but for a secret dread that Caussidière before dying would make open confession of certain matters which deeply concerned his own safety. So, by dint of intriguing and bribery, he at last contrived that the prisoner should leave his prison and escape from Paris.

Once safe on English soil, Caussidière became himself again. He forgot his abject terror and resumed his old manner. Then

before he had been in London many days arose the question—How was he to subsist? He had little or no money, and such talents as he possessed were not at that time in much demand. A happy thought struck him—he would go down to Scotland, hunt out the rich mistress of Annandale Castle, and perhaps secure some help from her sympathy—or her fear.

Thus it befel that he arrived quietly one day in the town of Dumfries, and within a few hours of his arrival heard that Marjorie was alive and dwelling with her mother at the Castle. Up to that moment he had been in doubt whether the woman he had betrayed was alive or dead—indeed, he had scarcely given her a thought, and cared not what fate had befallen her. But now, it was very different! She lived, and by the law of the land was his lawful wife.

His plans were soon laid. He determined to see Marjorie alone, and if she was obstinate and unforgiving, to use what power he had over her to the utmost, with the view of securing present and future help. On reflection, he had not much doubt that he would soon regain his old influence over her; for in the old days she had been as wax in his hands, and her character had seemed altogether gentle and unresisting.

He reckoned without his host. These seemingly feeble and too faithful natures, when once they gain the strength of indignation and the courage of despair, assume a force of determination sometimes unknown and foreign to the strongest and most passionate of men.

* * * * *

As matters had turned out, however, it was not with Marjorie herself that the Frenchman had had to reckon, but with her life-long friend and protector, John Sutherland. This pertinacious young hero, whom he had always hated, had now fully asserted his authority by giving him the first sound thrashing he had ever received in his life.

Baffled, bruised, and bleeding, livid with mortified rage, Caussidière remained for some time where Sutherland left him,

and when he at last found speech, cursed freely in his own tongue. Then he paced about madly, calling heaven to witness that he would have full and fierce revenge.

‘I will kill him,’ he cried, gnashing his teeth. ‘I will destroy him—I will tear him limb from limb! He has outraged me—he has profaned my person—but he shall pay dearly for it, and so shall she—so shall they all! I was right—he is her lover; but he shall find that I am the master, and she my slave.’

Presently he cooled a little, and sat down to think.

What should he, what could he, do? Of his power over Marjorie and the child there was no question; by the laws of both England and Scotland he could claim them both. But suppose they continued to set his authority at defiance, what then? They were comparatively rich; he was poor. He knew that in legal strife the richest is generally the conqueror; and, besides, while the war was waging, how was he to subsist?

Then he bethought him of his old hold upon Miss Hetherington, of his knowledge of the secret of Marjorie’s birth. It was useless to him now, for the scandal was common property, and Mother Rumour had cried it from house to house till she was hoarse. The proud lady had faced her shame, and had overcome it; everyone knew her secret now, and many regarded her with sympathy and compassion. For the rest, she set public opinion at defiance, and knowing the worst the world could say or do, breathed more freely than she had done for years.

Thus there was no hope from her; indeed, look which way he might, he saw no means of succour or revenge.

As he sat there, haggard and furious, he looked years older, but his face still preserved a certain comeliness.

Suddenly he sprang up again as if resolved on immediate action. As he did so he seemed to hear a voice murmuring his name.

‘Caussidière!’

He looked towards the window, and saw there, or seemed to

see, close pressed against the pane, a bearded human countenance gazing in upon him.

He struggled like a drunken man, glaring back at the face.

Was it reality, or dream? Two wild eyes met his, then vanished, and the face was gone.

If Caussidière had looked old and worn before, he looked death-like now. Trembling like a leaf, he sank back into the shadow of the room, held his hand upon his heart, like a man who had received a mortal blow.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE END OF A 'GOOD PATRIOT.'

CAUSSIDIÈRE remained in the room for some time, but as the face did not reappear, his courage in a measure returned to him.

At last he took up his hat and left the house.

He was still very pale, and glanced uneasily from side to side; he had by this time forgotten all about the child, and Marjorie too. He went through a succession of bye-streets to the police station, saw the inspector—a grim, bearded Scotchman—and demanded from him police protection.

'Protection! What's your danger?' asked the man politely.

'I am in danger of my life!' said Caussidière.

He was very excited and very nervous, and the peculiarity of his manner struck the man at once.

'Who's threatening ye?' he asked quietly.

The repose of his manner irritated Caussidière, who trembled more and more.

'I tell you I am in mortal peril. I am pursued. I shall be killed if I do not have protection, therefore I demand assistance, do you hear?'

Yes; the man heard, but apparently he did not heed. He already half suspected that the foreigner before him was a madman, and upon questioning Caussidière a little more he became convinced of it. The only information he could get was that

the Frenchman had seen a face looking at him through the window of the inn, and that he believed it to be the face of some enemy. As the information was so meagre, Caussidière was dismissed as having no tangible cause for fear, and no need whatever of police supervision.

After a short but stormy scene with the inspector he walked away, revolving in his mind what he must do to make himself secure.

Of one thing he was certain; he must leave Dumfries, and resign all hopes of obtaining further assistance from Marjorie or her friends. He must remain in hiding until political events veered round again and he could return to France.

He hurried back to his hotel, and locked himself again in his room. He drew down the blinds and lit the gas, then he turned out all the money he was possessed of, counted it carefully over, and disposed it about his person.

He had enough for his present needs, but as circumstances compelled him to look to the future, he decided that he had too little to allow him to satisfy the claims of his landlady; he therefore neglected to ring for her before leaving.

His next care was to dispose about his person any little articles which his portmanteau contained; then he drew from his pocket a small box, fixed on the false beard and moustache which it contained, and having otherwise disguised himself, stood before the mirror so transfigured that he believed even his dearest friend would not have known him.

By the time all this was done it was getting pretty late in the day, and close on the departure of the train he had decided to take.

He listened; he could hear nothing.

He walked boldly out of the room, and having quietly locked the door and put the key in his pocket, strolled leisurely out of the inn and down the street unrecognised by a soul. He went straight down to the railway station, took a ticket for the north, and entered the train, which was about to start.

He had a carriage to himself; the first thing he did, therefore, was to throw the key which he had taken from the room-door out of the window; then he travelled on in comparative peace.

It was somewhat late in the evening and quite dark when he reached his destination—a lonely village not far from Edinburgh. He walked to the nearest and quietest inn, and took a bedroom on the third floor.

That night he slept in peace. He remained in the village for several days, and during that time he kept mostly to his room.

On the night of the fourth day, however, he rang for the maid, who on answering the bell found him in a state of intense excitement.

'Bring me a time-table!' he said; 'or tell me when there is a train from this place!'

'There is none to-night, sir!'

'None to-night?'

'No, sir, the last train is gone; but the morn's morn——'

'Well?'

'There is one at seven o'clock to Edinburgh.'

'Then I will go by it—do you hear? At six you will call me, and I leave at seven!'

The girl nodded and retired, fully under the impression, as the inspector of police had been, that the man was mad.

At six o'clock in the morning the maid, with a jug of hot water in her hand, tripped up the stairs and knocked gently at Caussidière's bedroom door.

There was no reply.

She knocked louder and louder, but could elicit no sound, and the door was locked. Leaving the jug of water on the mat, she retired. In half-an-hour she returned again. The water was cold. She knocked louder and louder, with no result. Thinking now that something might be wrong, she called up her master. After some consultation the door was forced,

All recoiled in horror. There lay Caussidière dead in his bed, with his false beard beside him, and his eyes staring vacantly at the ceiling.

As there were no marks of violence upon him, it was generally believed by those who stood looking upon him that his death had been a natural one. How he met his death was never known. It was discovered long after, however, that he was a member of many Secret Societies, that he had betrayed in almost every case the trust reposed in him, and was marked in their black list as a 'traitor'—'doomed to die.'

CHAPTER XLIV.

CONCLUSION.

It was not until after Caussidière was laid in his grave that the news of his decease reached Marjorie. She read in a Scottish newspaper a description of the mysterious death of a French gentleman in a village near Edinburgh, and suspicious of the truth, she travelled to the place in Sutherland's company. The truth was speedily made clear; for among the loose articles found on the dead man's person were several letters in Caussidière's handwriting, and an old photograph of herself, taken in Dumfries.

Besides these there was a curious note-book, written in cipher unintelligible to those who had not been initiated, but having reference, doubtless, to the mysterious societies with which the deceased had been connected.

It would be false to say that Marjorie rejoiced at her husband's death; it would be equally false to say that it caused her much abiding pain. She was deeply shocked by his sudden end, that was all. Nevertheless, she could not conceal from herself that his removal meant life and freedom to herself and to the child. While he lived there would have been no peace for her in this world.

He was buried in a peaceful place, a quiet kirkyard not far from the sea ; and there, some little time afterwards, a plain tombstone was erected over his grave, with this inscription :

SACRED TO THE MEMORY
OF
LÉON CAUSSIDIÈRE,
Who Died suddenly in this Village,
June 15th, 18—.

‘ May he rest in peace.’

Marjorie had it placed there, in perfect forgiveness and tenderness of heart.

And now our tale is almost told. The figures that have moved upon our little stage begin slowly to fade away, and the curtain is about to fall. What little more there is to say may be added by way of epilogue in as few words as possible.

In due time, but not till nearly a year had passed, Marjorie married her old lover, John Sutherland. It was a quiet wedding, and after it was over the pair went away together into the Highlands, where they spent a peaceful honeymoon. During their absence little Léon remained at the Castle with his grandmother, who idolized him as the heir of the Hetheringtons. On their return they found the old lady had taken a new lease of life, and was moving about the house with much of her old strength, and a little of her old temper. But her heart was softened and sweetened once and for ever, and till the day of her death, which took place several years afterwards, she was a happy woman. She sleeps now in the quiet kirkyard, not far from her old friend the minister, close to the foot of whose grave is yet another, where old Solomon, the faithful servant, lies quietly at rest.

Marjorie Annan—or shall we call her Marjorie Sutherland ?—is now a gentle matron, with other children, boys and girls,

besides the beloved child born to her first husband. She hears them crying in the Castle garden, as she walks through the ancestral rooms where her mother dwelt so long in sorrow. She is a rich woman now, for by her mother's will she inherited all the property, which was found to be greater than any one supposed. She is proud of her husband, whom all the world knows now as a charming painter, and whose pictures adorn every year the Scottish Academy walls; she loves her children; and she is beloved by all the people of the pastoral district where she dwells.

The Annan flows along, as it has flowed for centuries past, and as it will flow for centuries to come. Often Marjorie wanders on its banks, and looking in its peaceful waters, sees the old faces come and go, like spirits in a dream. The gentle river gave her the name she loves best, and by which many old folk call her still—Marjorie Annan; and when her time comes, she hopes to rest not far from the side of Annan Water.

THE END.

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